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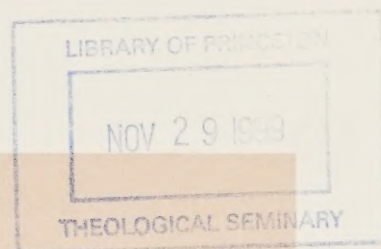
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The Princeton Theological Review

a journal by students, alumni/ae, and friends of Princeton Theological Seminary

that the light of God's truth may shine bright and increase

AUTUMN 1999



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The Princeton Theological Review

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Doctrine, Discipline and the Loss of the Mainline Voice

Randall Balmer, in a recent *New York Times* editorial, laments the loss of theological conviction that has characterized the mainline Protestant church for nearly a century. Citing the ecumenical movement as a particular culprit in this demise, Balmer describes how the once great denominations—Presbyterian, United Methodist, Lutheran and Episcopalian—have focused their attention on what he calls “the lowest common denominators of agreement: peace, justice, and inclusiveness.” In a wild desire to remain in good standing with the liberal status quo, the mainline denominations increasingly eschewed any doctrine or position that suggested an exclusive discipleship, a unique salvation, or a demanding ethic.

The results of this process, Balmer notes, are as sorry as they are familiar. Since the mid-1960’s, mainline Protestantism has suffered serious decline in its membership and vitality. As Balmer puts it,

Tragically, in an increasingly pluralistic society, mainline Protestants are the only religious group lacking a voice. Mainline Protestants have exchanged their theological and historical heritage for a mess of pottage, an ideology so calculated not to give offense that its very blandness is offensive (*N.Y. Times*, 28 August, 1999).

The challenge to maintain and proclaim a gospel that makes exclusive claims while offering an inclusive salvation has faced the church throughout its history. It is no more challenging now than it was for the first followers of Jesus in the multi-cultural setting of the Graeco-Roman world.

Two resources that Christians have always relied upon in this regard are doctrine and discipline, the teachings of the faith and the living of the faith. Together, doctrine and discipline serve to inform the Christian mind and shape Christian character. Long-

term patterns of compromise in doctrine and discipline, whether on the personal or corporate level, ultimately undermine the church’s ability to faithfully live out the fullness of the Gospel, and offer the world a unique vision of what peace, justice, and inclusiveness really are.

In 1 Timothy, Paul urges a young church leader to draw upon the resources available in doctrine and discipline. “Watch your life and your doctrine closely,” Paul advises Timothy, “persevere in them, because if you do, you will save both yourself and your hearers” (4:16).

If the mainline church is to regain its vitality—indeed, if it is to survive into the next century—it will have to forego its tendency to fashion itself after the image of society and live out its calling on the basis of distinctively Christian doctrine and discipline. Only then will it regain the theological nerve and spiritual authority to proclaim with power the inclusive Gospel of an exclusive Lord.

James McCullough
Executive Editor

Editors’ Note:

This is the last issue of our publishing year, and the last of the millennium! Our excitement about the future of the pTr continues, but we want to hear from you. This is a perfect time to express your thoughts about our progress and our direction. What inspires you? What aggravates you? What bores you? Send us your comments! Our Letters to the Editor section has been vacant recently, so here’s your chance to get published! Our best wishes to you, as we look forward to all the good that God is doing in his church and in this journal.

Inclusiveness or Exclusiveness?

Reflections on the Apostle Paul's Letters to the Corinthians.

by Ulrich Mauser

I The Question.

Questions of exclusiveness and inclusiveness play a dominant role in our nation, our culture, contemporary religion, and, more specifically, in the life and faith of Christian communities. In the United States the vast majority of the population consists of immigrants who, at an earlier or later time, left their native soil, their language, and their culture joining other people with entirely different backgrounds. In this situation the protection of diversity, the mutual acceptance of a colorful plurality of traditions, and a very wide-hearted tolerance of differences among its people belong to the national ethos of the United States. For this country inclusivity is not only a lofty ideal but a political necessity.

Inevitably the demand for an inclusive society leaves its mark on modern theology and penetrates deeply into the praxis of church life. The World Council of Churches, traditionally a powerful force in the rediscovery of the common core of a multitude of denominations, has lately turned to a macro-ecumenism which aims at the exploration of commonality among all religions in the world. The fervor for inclusiveness, and the heartfelt aversion to all types of intolerance, is so strong among us that inclusivity is declared a hallmark of genuine Christian faith and a prerequisite for entry into the kingdom of God. The classic definition of the marks of the church set forth in the Nicene Creed, "we believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church", is felt to be in need of a modern amendment, "we believe in one holy catholic apostolic and inclusive Church". Any form of exclusiveness is said to be in direct contradiction to the Gospel. We hear the words of the Johannine Christ, "anyone who comes to me I will never drive away" (John 6:37), and the one who said,

"I have come to call not the righteous but sinners" (Mark 2;17).

The demand for inclusivity is a serious and legitimate challenge to the church of our time. Concerning the language of God, in matters involving the relationship of the Christian faith with other religions, with respect to gender issues, and in view of the many socio-ethical issues brought about by the reality of a multi-ethnic populace – in all these areas the problem of inclusivity and exclusivity has been placed in the forefront of discussions about what Christians may acknowledge as responsible forms of faith and life.

This article offers a contribution to the problem of inclusivity and exclusivity from the perspective of New Testament studies. Its scope is limited to the Corinthian letters of the apostle Paul, in the hope that the Corinthian letters might prove particularly helpful to this question. Paul's communications to the Christian community in Corinth are more revealing, on our particular topic, than any of the other letters of the apostle because they deal in large measure with concrete issues with which the community had to wrestle. 1 Corinthians resembles in many ways a case study, and 2 Corinthians is not lacking in close attention to concrete matters of congrega-

Dr. Ulrich Mauser was the Otto Piper Professor of Biblical Theology at Princeton Theological Seminary for 9 years, and is a long-time friend and advisor of the PTR. This article grew from Dr. Mauser's presentations at the Greenhoe Lectures, which he delivered at Louisville Presbyterian Theological Seminary in February of 1999. Dr. Mauser wishes to thank Louisville President John Mulder and Dr. Dianne Reistroffer for their assistance in this project.

tional life. My thesis is that for the apostle Paul neither inclusivity nor exclusivity is an abstract principle whose application to a given issue might resolve the matter. The Greek equivalents to our modern terms do not appear in Paul's letters, but the problem of including and excluding someone or something is by no means alien to Paul. His language can be so vigorously exclusivist that it may well embarrass modern readers. On the other hand, his reasoning can be so radically inclusivist that there appears to be no exception to the embrace of everybody and everything. Is he so involved in ad hoc arguments that he ends in contradictions? Are we, then, well advised to seek in his writings a consistency that might guide us as we draw our own conclusions in our own time?

It is at any rate certain that there exists in Paul's Corinthian letters a sharp tension, or better, an inevitable dialectic between exclusivity and inclusivity. To prefer one side of this tension to the neglect of the other means to opt for half-a-Paul, and half-a-Paul is a dead Paul. I shall therefore present the two sides of the issue separately. In part II, I will deal with the exclusivist side of the coin and with nothing else. In part III I will turn the coin over and look at the inclusivist side. Not until part IV will I attempt to consider the two sides together, seeking to do justice to the dialectic that addresses us in Paul's thought.

II The Exclusiveness of Christian Faith.

We will first look at eight snapshots from the letters, initially without comment, following the NRSV.

Case #1 (1 Cor 5:1-5). Paul has heard of an example of sexual immorality committed by a member of the Christian community so severe that he insists on the expulsion of the offender from the church. A man is living together with the wife of his, apparently deceased, father. Paul is so shaken by the news that he censures the Corinthians for not removing the man from their common life (5:2). He unites in spirit with the Corinthians in a court proceeding, which results in the separation of the perpetrator from the congregation. This move has lethal consequences for the offender, but in the expectation that he may ultimately be saved in Christ's judgment (5:5). Paul considers the action of the offender so destructive to the community that his exclusion must be enforced.

Case #2 (1 Cor 5:9-13). Almost immediately after case #1, Paul mentions a previously written letter, now lost. In this lost letter Paul insisted that Christians not associate with sexually immoral persons (5:9). Some had understood him to mean a separation from all the immoral and the greedy, the robbers and idolaters in society at large. Not so, he now

clarifies, because if that had been his meaning they might as well emigrate from the world altogether. What he intended to say was this: "now I am writing to you not to associate with any who bears the name of brother or sister who is sexually immoral or greedy, or is an idolater, reviler, drunkard, or robber. Do not even eat with such a one" (5:11). One cannot help but put alongside a typical scene from the accounts of Jesus' conduct: "as he sat at dinner in Levi's house, many tax collectors and sinners were sitting with Jesus and his disciples – for there were many who followed him" (Mark 2:15). Are we confronted here with contradictions, with differences rooted in the contingencies of situations, or with complementary tensions that defy clean-cut solutions?

Case #3 (1 Cor 6:1-11). A grievance has occurred among the Corinthian Christians. Someone, or a certain group, feels defrauded by a fellow Christian and seeks justice at the Roman municipal court. This recourse to the secular system of justice horrifies Paul. He advises that it is wrong for the community of Christ to get mixed up with a legal system dominated by the unrighteous (6:1), through judges "who have no standing in the church" (6:4). This counsel of separation from the much-admired system of Roman law is capped by a summons to beware of self-deception: "Do you not know that wrongdoers will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived! Fornicators, idolaters, adulterers, male prostitutes, sodomites, thieves, the greedy, drunkards, revilers, robbers – none of these will inherit the kingdom of God. And this is what some of you used to be. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God" (6:9-11).

Case #4 (1 Cor 6:12-20). In Corinth there is a group of Christians who argue that all things are lawful for them, and that consequently they can avail themselves of the services of a prostitute without harming their faith and life. Paul's answer is a categorical denial. Prostitution is not simply a moral lapse, but an act that contradicts membership in Christ's body. "Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Should I therefore take the members of Christ and make them members of a prostitute? Never!" (6:15). Prostitution is totally excluded from the community of faith.

Case #5 (1 Cor 10:14-22). A sea of cults with its sanctuaries and personnel surrounded the small group of Christians in Corinth. Pausanias, visiting Corinth about 100 years after Paul, observed in the city temples for Apollo, Aphrodite, Athena, Artemis, Asclepius, Demeter, Isis, Kore, Serapis, Tyche, and a Pantheon. The religious market was well stocked and Christians could not avoid rubbing elbows with

devotees of many gods. This contact became a problem in Corinth, and while Paul did not frown on the consumption of meat sacrificed in pagan temples (ch.8), he outlawed participation in pagan worship. Adopting a Jewish custom of calling foreign gods demons, he writes: "Therefore, my dear friends, flee from the worship of idols...what pagans sacrifice they sacrifice to demons and not to God. I do not want you to be partners with demons. You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons. You cannot partake of the table of the Lord and the table of demons" (10:14, 20-21). These instructions to the Christian community follow strict Jewish adherence to the Decalogue, excluding any and all foreign deities from worship.

Case #6 (2 Cor 6:14-7:1). This passage reads almost like a manifesto for exclusivity: "Do not be mismatched with unbelievers. For what partnership is

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there between righteousness and lawlessness? Or what fellowship is there between light and darkness? What agreement does Christ have with Beliar? Or what does a believer share with an unbeliever? What agreement has the temple of God with idols? For we are the temple of the living God, as God said, 'I will live in them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Therefore come out from them, says the Lord, and touch nothing unclean: then I will welcome you, and will be your father, and you shall be my sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty. Since we have these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from every defilement of body and spirit, making holiness perfect in the fear of God'".

Case #7 (2 Cor 11:4, 12-15). Chapters 10-13 in 2 Corinthians presuppose a situation that is different from the other parts of Paul's letters to that community. A group of Jewish Christians had come to

Corinth claiming apostolic power superior to Paul's, undermining Paul's position in the congregation. The lure of this group is, for Paul, no less than a satanic temptation that perverts the Christian proclamation. He fears the essential points of the Corinthians' faith and life are being subverted. He writes: "If someone comes and proclaims another Jesus than the one we proclaimed, or if you receive a different spirit from the one you received, or a different gospel from the one you accepted, you submit to it readily enough" (11:4). There is no room for acknowledging the contributions of fellow workers, as Paul had done in earlier communications (1 Cor 3:5-6). With the arrival of claims of superior apostolic authority a fatal disease has broken out, the true church displaced by a pseudo-church. "Such boasters are false apostles, deceitful workers, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ. And no wonder! Even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. So it is not strange if his ministers also disguise themselves as ministers of righteousness" (2 Cor 11: 13-15). Peace with the super-apostles is unthinkable for Paul. His stance against them can only be principled exclusion.

Case #8 (2 Cor 13:1-3). Through his attack on the super-apostles, Paul aims to bring about a change of mind among the Corinthian Christians. He hopes to call them back to their roots and make healthy growth of the community possible again, but fears that the bitter task of severing off a whole group from the Christian community may lie before him (12:20-21). His repeated warnings about discordant passions (12:20) and persistent, devious sexual practices have been disregarded (12:21). He has no alternative but to abandon the lenience he had practiced before. Paul writes: "This is the third time I am coming to you. 'Any charge must be sustained by the evidence of two or three witnesses'. I warned those who sinned previously and all the others, and I warn them now while absent, as I did when present on my second visit, that if I come again, I will not be lenient" (13:1-2).

Evidence for Exclusiveness Beyond the Cases

These eight cases that advocate separation and exclusivity are, of course, no more than a collage of fragments isolated from their context. But it is already manifest that a stress on exclusion occurs in Paul's Corinthian letters with consistency and in relation to several different facets of the congregation's life. Beyond these eight cases, moreover, there is broader evidence for Paul's insistence on some form of separateness. Three additional arguments may be mentioned briefly.

First, we find exclusiveness in further portions of the letters. For instance, the difficult passage in 1 Cor 12:1-3, with its veto on the curse of Jesus, deals with an absolute form of exclusion.

Second, the eight cases I have selected are imbedded in language that also implies separateness. I mention three examples. 1) Repeatedly in the Corinthian letters the Christian readers are addressed as "saints" or "holy ones". The concept of holiness always carries with it some form of separateness, or exclusion. 2) Paul separates people into those who are being saved and those who are being lost depending on their response to the Christian message. The word of the cross splits people (I,1:18). 3) Both the Christian community and the individual Christian can be called a temple—a sacred precinct set apart and enjoying divine protection against any violation of its boundary (I, 3:16 and 6:20).

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Third, theological arguments supply reasons for the notions of separation. At this point, I must be content to provide only two illustrations of the theological reasoning behind Paul's exclusivistic statements, which are basic for his whole argument.

First I turn to the case of incest discussed in case #1 (1 Cor 5:1-5). The exact circumstances of this case are unclear, but Paul's charge makes it likely that a son is married to his stepmother. Paul's judgment on this issue is extremely severe: "I have already pronounced judgment in the name of the Lord Jesus on the man who has done such a thing. When you are assembled, and my spirit is present, with the power of our Lord Jesus you are to deliver this man to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that his spirit may be saved in the day of our Lord Jesus". Why insist on permanent exclusion from the community with deadly consequences? Why does Paul seemingly con-

tradict his own council from the preceding chapter, when in defense of some accusation brought against him, he writes: "do not pronounce judgment before the time, before the Lord comes, who will bring to light the things now hidden in darkness and will disclose the purposes of the heart" (4:5)?

Two clues to this bothersome question are tucked away in the passage. First, Paul intimates that the incest has not only been allowed to take place in the midst of the community, but that some Corinthian Christians applauded and even boasted about the incident (5:2,6). Second, the original word order in Paul's verdict recommends the reading: "I pronounce judgment on the man who has done such a thing in the name of the Lord Jesus". Apparently, some in Corinth had heard Paul speak of the liberty of the Christian, which extends over everything on earth: "all things are yours, the world or life or death or the present or the future—all belong to you" (3:22). The watchword "all things are lawful for me" was shaping the fundamental ethical decisions in the community (6:12 and 10:23). To them Paul's gospel had announced the advent of a glorious new world whose power would blast away the societal conventions and moral rules which were only needed to keep the old world intact. The incest in Corinth then became an object lesson in Christian freedom, consummated, and celebrated, in the very name of the Lord Jesus. Paul vigorously resists this drive for unlimited liberty. He declares that in Christian freedom "all things belong to you," but he concludes, "and you belong to Christ, and Christ belongs to God" (3:23). A distinguished commentator on 1 Corinthians suggests that Paul's entire argument in this section (5:1 to the conclusion of Chapter 11) focuses on limits to Christian freedom (C.K.Barrett, *Commentary on First Corinthians*, 120).

A second glimpse at the theological dimension of exclusion is given us in case #3, (6:9-11). In that passage, the sentence wrongdoers "will not inherit the kingdom of God" forms a bracket around a list of offenders that begins with fornicators and idolaters and ends with revilers and robbers. Paul reminds the Corinthians that some of them, before they joined the Christian community, had belonged to exactly that group of people whose actions cause them to be excluded from the kingdom of God. But their entry into the company of believers brought about a radical change of orientation and behavior. Something had occurred that ended the old life and began a totally new form of existence. Something had been done for them, and in them, and consequently also by them, that made them new creatures. They were baptized. "You were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of God" (6:11).

Baptism is a dying as well as a rising; one does not exist without the other. In Romans Paul writes, "do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? Therefore we have been buried with him by baptism into death, so that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life" (Rom 6:3-4). Baptism is being engrafted into Christ's death and Christ's resurrection. Therefore to live in the sign of baptism implies with necessity a death to the corruption and decay of the old life. One side of baptism is this exclusion of a world dominated by sin. Exclusivity is for this reason a hallmark of the Christian life, and the loss of exclusiveness is a sign of a crippled faith.

III The Inclusiveness of Christian Faith.

In the previous section we looked at Paul's letters to the Corinthians intending to discover elements of exclusiveness in the apostle's thought. We found a pervasive emphasis on exclusiveness in these writings that is connected to basic notions of Paul's proclamation and practice. We paid no attention, in section II, to ideas stressing the inclusivity of the gospel. It is time now to turn the coin on its other side and consider the inclusiveness of faith and of the Christian community in the same letters of Paul.

To address this aspect of our question, we will not isolate cases in the letters, but investigate three topics that reflect the embracing quality of the Christian faith. They are: 1) the unity of the church as a community of Jews and Greeks, 2) the concept of Christ as the second Adam, and 3) Paul's practice of tolerance.

1) The unity of the church as a community of Jews and Greeks.

Three times in 1 Corinthians, in very different contexts, Paul mentions Jews and Greeks together as co-equals within a single community. The co-equality of Jew and Greek can be a negative bond because they can be partners in missing the true wisdom of God so long as they reject the gospel of the word of the cross (1 Cor 1:17-18, 22-23). However, once they embrace the gospel, they become together the recipients of a single call in which the common acknowledgment of Christ as the power and wisdom of God unites them into a single body (1:24). Baptism binds Jews and Greeks together in one body through the gift of the one spirit: "For in the one spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and we were all made to drink of one Spirit" (12:13).

The phrase "Jews and Greeks" signifies, for Paul, not two segments of the Mediterranean population, but the entire human race in its two ultimate components. The phrase is formulated from the Jewish perspective, which separates humanity according to its history with the one God of Israel. There is, on the one side, the only true God who has established his covenant with a specific people as his witnesses, and on the other side, the multitude of gods who are worshipped by the rest of the human race. The Greek, as the predominant culture of the pagan world, represents the totality of the population without a history with the covenant God of Israel. The phrase "Jews and Greeks" therefore echoes the deep chasm between God's covenant people, to whom "belong the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the worship, and the promises" (Rom 9:4), and those who are excluded from the ranks of the elect.

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In spite of this background the phrase "Jews and Greeks" has become, in Paul's usage, the very reversal of its origin. His gospel mandated the bringing together of Jews and Greeks into a single, social body, a unity in which even the most deep seated religious convictions and traditions were effectively overcome. This mandate amounted to no less than a revolutionary movement toward inclusivity. It militated against the established Jewish conviction to be the unique people of a unique God, and it also ran counter to the anti-Jewish sentiment in the Greco-Roman culture. Some illustrations of these attitudes on both sides may help us to get a feeling for the depth and the tenaciousness of the chasm separating Jew from non-Jew.

In writings of Jews roughly contemporary with the life of Paul, we frequently find a pronounced atti-

tude of religious and moral superiority over their pagan neighbors. Much of the Jewish tradition holds that God has bound himself in a covenant with Israel that implies the rejection of the Gentile world. A few sentences from the Rule of the Community of the group of Qumran typifies this orientation: it is incumbent on all true Jews "to love all the children of light" but also "to hate all the children of darkness," because God commanded Israel through Moses and the prophets "to love all that he has chosen and hate all that he has despised" (1QS 1:3-4, 9-10. See also H.L.Strack and P. Billerbeck, *Kommentar zum Neuen Testament*, III, 139-155 and IV/1, 353-414).

But resentment, hatred, and hostility were by no means an attitude reserved for the Jewish side. Pagan society was, for its part, vigorously engaged in the effort to malign Jews. At the beginning of the first century B.C., Appolonios Molon declared Jews to be

*Only as the second Adam can Christ
be the champion of an unlimited
inclusion of all humans.*

*The effect of the Christ event is,
therefore, totally inclusive of
every human, and the mission to the
Gentiles becomes the necessary and
compelling consequence of this event.*

atheists, misanthropic creatures, the most stupid of all barbarians who have not contributed a single useful invention for the improvement of human life. Fifty years later Cicero declares Judaism to be nothing but a barbarous superstition. A man of the fairness and character of Tacitus produces in his *Histories* a lengthy portrait of Judaism which is highly unfavorable: "the Jews regard as profane all that we hold sacred; on the other hand, they permit all that we abhor." As a nation they are "extremely loyal toward one another, and always ready to show compassion; but toward every other people they feel only hate and enmity" (Tacitus, *Histories* V, 3-5).

Looking at this evidence of the deep split between Jews and non-Jews, one may draw the conclusion that forging a community out of Jews and Greeks would be an idealistic pipe-dream. Nevertheless the goal of radical inclusiveness of Jew and Greek in a concrete human community was for Paul a mandate

of the gospel. He pursued it to the point of predicating his entire mission on the conviction that this goal was achievable. We need to ask: what was it in Paul's gospel that demanded, produced, and safeguarded the inclusion of Jew and non-Jew in a single human community? This question leads us to the topic of our next section: Christ as the second Adam.

2) *The Concept of Christ as the Second Adam.*

In the 15th chapter of 1 Corinthians we read: "since death came through a human being, the resurrection of the dead has also come through a human being; for as all die in Adam, so all will be made alive in Christ... Thus it is written, 'The first man, Adam, became a living being'; the last Adam became a life-giving spirit. But it is not the spiritual that is first, but the physical, and then the spiritual. The first man was from the earth, a man of dust: the second man is from heaven. As was the man of dust, so are those who are of dust; and as is the man of heaven, so are those who are of heaven. Just as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we will also bear the image of the man of heaven" (1 Cor 15: 21-22 and 45-49).

What does "Adam" mean? The "Adam" in 1 Corinthians 15 is the Adam of the biblical creation story in Genesis 1-3, the first human and the originator of human history. This story presents Adam as an individual, but Paul, as a Jew, hears the word with Jewish ears, and he knows that the Hebrew word 'adam' signifies not an individual but a group. The word occurs over 560 times in the Old Testament and connotes the idea of "everybody", "all", "human being", or even "humanity". The individual Adam in Genesis 1-3 is representative of the human race in its totality. In his story the story of everybody is told. As primal man, the representative of the human race, Adam is the human figure before all individualization takes place in the course of human history.

The concept of Christ as the second Adam adopts the understanding of the biblical creation story that Adam is the representative of the whole human race. Ethnic differentiations, racial separations, and religious bodies set apart from each other by traditions are therefore all branches from the one single trunk of humanity represented by Adam. But God's act in Christ is the re-creation of all human history in its primal unity. Christ as the second Adam transcends and collects all differences without exception because a new creation has entered the world in him. Note that Paul parallels Christ with Adam but not with other outstanding persons in the history of God's covenant with Israel. For Paul, Abraham, Moses, and David are inevitably figures that are tied to Jewish ethnicity and tradition. They play an exceedingly important role for the Christian faith, but Paul could

not speak of Christ as a new Abraham or a second Moses. A correlation of this type would have restricted the significance of Christ by depriving him of the power to be the originator of a renewed humanity in which ethnic, racial, and cultic differences are no longer valid lines of separation. Only as the second Adam can Christ be the champion of an unlimited inclusion of all humans. The effect of the Christ event is, therefore, totally inclusive of every human, and the mission to the Gentiles becomes the necessary and compelling consequence of this event.

It is not, however, the application of a principle of inclusivity over against exclusivity that produces Paul's mission to the Gentiles. He has no abstract ideal for the formation of human society. Rather he is captivated by the encounter with the risen Jesus Christ, who was dead but has been raised by God into imperishable life. The power of Adam that is at work in all, in Jew and non-Jew alike, is death. The image of the man of dust clings to all human existence, without exception, until the coming of the one new human, infused with the spirit, who does not succumb to the limitation of human life. Christ is the new creation because he is risen from the dead. The inclusion of all in Christ is consequently not a philosophical deduction from a principle of inclusiveness, but is the corollary to an act of God that alone has the power to abolish the separations that haunt human history.

3) Paul's Practice of Tolerance.

The formation of the church of Jews and non-Jews is not the only social reality that signals the arrival of a new, inclusive order. The social structure of the church, as it appears in the Corinthian letters, allows and protects diversity in several different areas. There is, first of all, a remarkable appreciation of different gifts in the congregation, which contribute to a colorful variety of activities in the Christian community. There is, second, an equally remarkable restraint on the apostle's part in which he restricts his views to the standard of advice and counsel, while leaving room for individuals to make decisions according to their own needs and insights. And there is, third, a freedom from social conditions which remain in effect, but which are also transcended by faith.

The new creation of God in Christ includes every human life in the power of Christ's resurrection and, consequently, the body of the church is built from believers of all races, languages, and traditions. In this body the variety of gifts is abundant. "For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. For in the one Spirit we were all

baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and we were all made to drink of one Spirit" (1 Cor 12:12-13). The presence of the Spirit produces no dead conformity, but the rich play of differences: "To one is given through the Spirit the utterance of wisdom, and to another the utterance of knowledge according to the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit, to the other the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another the discernment of spirits, to another various kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues. All these are activated by one and the same Spirit, who allots to each one individually just as the Spirit chooses" (12: 8-11). Later in the same chapter Paul gives a somewhat different

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list of gifts: "God has appointed in the church first apostles, second prophets, third teachers; then deeds of power, then gifts of healing, forms of assistance, forms of leadership, various kinds of tongues" (12: 27-28). A detailed analysis of each of the gifts in these two lists would reveal valuable insights into the social life of the Corinthian church, but we stress only one point: the variety of gifts is ample evidence that Paul accepted and encouraged diversity in the community. Diverse gifts are not considered a threat to the unity of the body, rather they add to its richness and consolidate its health.

Paul's Corinthian letters provide evidence also that the apostle was cautious about giving practical advice in matters of social relationships. He was careful to reserve a good measure of freedom for individual Christians in decisions about their own life. In certain areas of decision making he was tolerant of choices that might not have been his own. Especially

when discussing questions of marriage (1 Cor 7), he exercised restraint, respecting the need for his readers to adjust his advice in view of their own conditions and capabilities. In giving advice about whether or not virgins in the community ought to get married, he stresses that he is giving his opinion. Those who asked his advice can follow it or decide differently (7: 25–26). In his view, unmarried people in the community would do best if they remained unmarried, but his counsel is not given to force conformity with his own decision upon his readers (7: 35).

We close this section with a glance at the freedom from social conditions for members of the Christian community, as Paul saw it. In 1 Cor 7:17 he mentions a rule that he has established in all his congregations: the acceptance of every person into the Christian community without regard to social stratification. The rule is so important to the apostle that he repeats it three times within a short passage: “let each of you lead the life that the Lord has assigned, to which God called you” (7:17); “Let each of you remain in the condition in which you were called” (7:20); and again, “in whatever condition you were called, brothers and sisters, there remain with God” (7:24). Paul specifically safeguards entry into the community for the circumcised or uncircumcised person, the slave and free person, and the married and unmarried person. It is important to realize that these forms of social status belong to greatly different areas of social differentiation. Paul brings them together to emphasize that no form of societal difference can hinder the acceptance of those who, in their very communion, represent a new society created by the gospel of the second Adam, the originator of a new creation.

Paul’s rule that every Christian ought to remain in the social condition in which he or she entered the Christian community is often criticized today as a hindrance to social reform. The apocalyptic notion of the impending end of the world, which motivated Paul’s rule, is seen to dull ethical obligations and hinder efforts towards social change. This criticism cannot be taken lightly. It raises the hermeneutical concern about the attitude of apocalyptic to ethics, which can not be dismissed with a few sentences. But we need to address another side to this issue of Christian freedom from social conditions. Freedom and slavery are, in Paul’s terminology, not irreconcilable opposites but complementary concepts which describe together the essence of Christian living. The Christian is neither simply free nor simply a slave. Christian life is, rather, the unity of being free and a slave at the same time. “For whoever was called in the Lord as a slave is a freed person belonging to the Lord, just as whoever was free when called is a slave

of Christ” (1 Cor 7:22). This dialectic denies that any social difference has the strength to hinder a person access to the new community. It is not necessary to wait until social changes have effected improvements in societal structures to allow persons access to a group which belongs to the initiator of a new creation. In the sway of this dialectic of faith in Christ, there is no person unworthy, or secondary within the community. It is an exceedingly strong affirmation of inclusiveness.

It is true that in terms of social strategy and action Paul’s statements sometimes left customs and laws of his time unaffected. But it is also true that some of his concrete advice, especially in matters concerning the relation of men and women, is of such lofty height that its realization contains the germs of an upheaval of customary mores. When one Corinthian group suggests that marriage is an infe-

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rior custom of society because it chains men and women to mundane necessities and drives (read 1 Cor 7:1 as an inquiry of the Corinthians), he replies that abstention from conjugal relations is not an avenue to greater perfection, but an entry point of temptation. Paul’s advice to husbands and wives, in identical wording, nullifies any difference between the genders: “The husband should give to his wife her conjugal rights, and likewise the wife to her husband. For the wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband does; likewise the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife does” (7: 3-4). The application of what can only be called an egalitarian principle to married life also applies to the community’s worship. Men and women do not only participate together in worship, they share leadership functions in which gender differences are eliminated. Again, Paul employs wording that speaks of men and women in identical terms: “Any man who prays or prophesies with something on his head disgraces his head, but any woman who

prays or prophesies with her head unveiled disgraces her head" (1 Cor 11: 4-5). Of course Paul is concerned in the entire passage 1 Cor 11:2-16 to preserve a custom observed in all churches (11:16) which calls for a difference between men and women in wearing head-covers during worship. But this difference is no hindrance to his acknowledgment that women and men share in public prayer and participate in the exercise of prophetic activity. In essentials they are equals.

IV The Exclusiveness and Inclusiveness of Christian Faith.

So far we have looked separately at the apparently contradictory elements of Christian faith in Paul's Corinthian letters.

There is, on the one hand, the exclusiveness of the Christian God, the Christian faith, and the Christian life. Any worship of gods other than the Father of the Lord Jesus Christ amounts to keeping company with demons (1 Cor 10: 20-21), Corinthian Christians are happily separated from their pagan past in which they were led astray by dumb idols incapable of intelligible communication (1 Cor 12:2). Christian life can therefore be described as a life of exclusion from lawlessness and darkness (2 Cor 6:14-7:1). Backsliding into habits of misconduct risks exclusion from the kingdom of God (1 Cor 6:9-11), and is irreconcilable with membership in Christ's body (1 Cor 6:15). Libertinism as a consequence of Christian freedom is answered by expulsion from the community (1 Cor 5:1-5) and the persistence in immoral behavior carries the same consequences (2 Cor 13:1-3). False teaching is inexcusable. Paul accuses the super-apostles of being emissaries of Satan (2 Cor 11:13-15) from whose influence the community has to separate itself.

On the other hand, Paul advocates in truly revolutionary terms the inclusivity of God's act in Christ and the Christian community. With the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead a totally new stage of history has been initiated. There is now "a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new!" (2 Cor 5:17). Therefore, the divisions of the old world have become immaterial. Slave and free, female and male, Greek and Jew have their legitimate home in the Christian body. The old social orders still leave their imprint on the community of the new creation, but they are cracking noticeably. Socially underprivileged Christians are admitted to unrestricted membership, they are protected against hurtful neglect at the communal gatherings (1 Cor 11:22), and at certain points the inequalities imposed by social stratification are daringly eliminated (1 Cor 7:3-4; 11:4-5).

If one places side by side these aspects of the Corinthian letters it becomes evident that, for Paul, neither exclusivity nor inclusivity is an abstract norms that determines the fabric of Christian life. They are aspects of the victory of the new Adam in whom the old creation has already met its death and the world reconciled to God has made its entry.

This means that the Christian gospel has its own dynamic of exclusivity and inclusivity, and we must now examine Paul's understanding of this dynamic more closely.

Paul and the Ordering of Gifts

We observed in section III how Paul is anxious to protect the diversity of service in the community, but he is also concerned that the multitude of individual contributions not militate against the essential unity of the congregation. I want to make some more comprehensive observations to clarify Paul's insistence on the value of diverse gifts, as well as his efforts to establish an order of gifts that safeguards the unity of the body.

Both lists of the gifts of the Spirit in 1 Cor 12:8-11

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and 12:28 reflect some preferences, but neither list arranges the gifts in a systematic order of value. There is however an important, partial exception to this observation. When Paul talks about groups of persons with diverse qualifications for service in the church, he begins the list in 1 Cor 12:28 with three groups that he designates the highest ranking gifts: "God has appointed in the church first apostles, second prophets, third teachers". Paul intends a descending order of importance in the strict sense of the word. The three designations of "apostle", "prophet", and "teacher" have for several decades provoked intense scholarly investigation about the precise mean-

ing of these terms in Paul's vocabulary. The discussions have not yielded widely shared results. The short descriptions in the next three paragraphs are my attempt to summarize readings that have solid textual evidence behind them.

1) *The Apostle*. (As a particularly helpful, theologically sensitive small book I refer to C.K.Barrett, *The Signs of an Apostle*, London: Epworth Press, 1970). An apostle, as Paul uses the word, is one of a group of specially called people who have been commissioned through a direct appearance of the risen Christ to spread the gospel in the world in accordance with a basic kerygmatic proclamation as in 1 Cor 15:3-5: "I handed on to you as of first importance what in turn I had received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures, and that he was buried, and that he was raised on the third day in accordance with

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the scriptures, and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve". The commission as an apostle expires with the death of the person. It can not be passed on to successors and is, for that reason, not continued in the later history of the church. The entire Christian mission, the order and life of the church in its primal period, depends utterly on this apostolic commission. If Paul's apostleship is questioned, as it is in the case of the super-apostles, he becomes totally intolerant and defends his status with every rhetorical weapon available to him. Apostleship is an irreplaceable and unrepeatable status conferred by the risen Christ and the apostle's commission defines the meaning of the Christian gospel for all Christian communities.

2) *The Prophet*. (My summary is indebted largely to the groundbreaking study of Thomas W. Gillespie, *The First Theologians: A Study in Early Christian Prophecy*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994). The prophets who appear in Paul's letters have little to do with predicting the future. They receive insight through inspiration of the Spirit to communicate to the community the will of the risen Lord. Their prophetic guidance is based on the kerygma and is offered in the form of an exposition or expansion of the tradition. The exposition of the kerygma in the prophetic utterance is frequently accompanied by appeal to scripture. It is, further, clothed in intelligible discourse and subject to correcting criticism from other prophetic voices. The discernment of spirits, the developing growth of the community's tradition—in short a highly theological task—was performed by the prophets in Paul's churches.

3. *The Teacher*. The teachers are not so much the guardians and interpreters, as the transmitters of what the churches had decided to accept as the true and reliable teachings in the evolving communities. Their task presupposes the conviction that Christian faith and Christian life can and must be taught, the freedom of further growth and thus modification of this tradition notwithstanding.

Paul's listing of the three basic gifts of apostle, prophet, and teacher in the church, and their governing and normative status in relation to all other gifts, invites careful consideration. It establishes that Christian life in the enjoyment and guidance of the Spirit is the outgrowth of a strictly historical act of God in the person of a particular, single human being in a specific time and specific place. The commission to be a messenger announcing this act of God is equally historically specified, and so is the Spirit-directed explication of the ongoing will of God through prophetic speech. The gifts of service in the community, which manifest themselves in a great variety of contributions, are placed on the foundation of the apostolic, prophetic, and teaching tradition of the church. The apostolic kerygma, the prophetic theology, and the instructional tradition of the church are the source of the diversity in the Christian body. They are, at the same time, the guarantee of its unity in the one body of Christ.

The two lists of charismas in 1 Cor 12:8-11 and 12:28 contain a middle section in which three gifts recall the picture of Jesus' ministry in the gospels. The first list names "faith, healing, and working of miracles" (12: 9-10), and in the second "workers of miracles, healers, and helpers" (12:28) are placed together. The triads in Paul's lists are not identical, and the Greek wording of the three coordinated words is

sufficiently different from language in the gospels to rule out a direct dependency of Paul on gospel traditions. However, it is difficult not to think of the miracles, healings, and stories of help to the helpless which are typical for so much of the narrative material in our gospels. This implies that the gifts of the Spirit given to the Christian community after Easter are, in part, a continuation of the ministry of Jesus. This is not meant in the sense of completing, augmenting, or re-enacting the completely unique messianic ministry of the Son of God. But it does mean that the nature of the gifts of the Spirit, their powerfully helpful and healing character, are in the line of a positive analogy to the ministry of Jesus. Once more, as in the gifts of apostleship, prophecy, and teaching, there is a firm connection with the act of God in the history of Jesus and it is that connection that grounds the diversity of gifts in the unifying center of the work of Christ.

Conclusion

The church at the close of the second millennium is surrounded on all sides by the demands of many different forms of pluralism. These demands are unavoidable, frequently they are socially well grounded, and their implementation may often yield positive public results. It is not the church's task to criticize or obstruct improvements of public life that can be, at least in part, attributed to recognition of

pluralism in our time and society. But the relative recognition of pluralism is accompanied for the church by the danger of identifying societal ideals with the kingdom of God, or even with the good order of the church.

What the church finds in Paul's Corinthian letters is without a doubt a ringing endorsement of the inclusiveness of Christian faith and life. As the Pauline gospel contains the staggeringly innovative inclusion of Jews and Gentiles into a single community, so does the internal life of the congregation treasure the existence of manifold forms of gifts, providing space for inclusivity and diversity. A Christian community deprived of these riches would be impoverished indeed. But the Christian community is also involved in a process of moving toward a goal, in a transformation which must not be compromised. Being part of the body of Christ brings about a crisis unto death of the old creature which must pass away in order to make room for the new creature which must come to life. Christian life is distinct from, and therefore exclusive of, non-Christian life by this process of sanctification. A Christianity which brushes aside this exclusiveness betrays its own law on which it is founded. It makes itself unbelievable and irrelevant to the non-Christian world as long as it insists on the simplistic and unthinking slogan that equates, without substantial modifications, inclusivity with the gospel.

Peter Martyr Vermigli And The Reformed Doctrine of Justification

by Frank A. James III

I. Introduction

There is an intriguing, if obscure, historical anecdote which links Peter Martyr Vermigli to Princeton Seminary via Francis Turretin. Charles Hodge, like his predecessor Archibald Alexander, greatly valued Turretin's *Institutio Theologiae Elencticae*, and retained it as the theological textbook at Princeton until superseded by his own *Systematic Theology* in the early 1870's.¹ As it turns out, Francis Turretin, like Vermigli, was of Italian heritage. His family lineage can be traced to the Italian city of Lucca, where in 1541-1542, the Turretini clan came under the spell of the new Augustinian Prior, Peter Martyr Vermigli. The Turretini family was converted to Protestantism through his teaching and later emigrated to Geneva where Francis Turretin wrote the book that would later become the standard theological text at Princeton for many years. Illuminating as this historical anecdote may be, Vermigli's more significant influence is found in the fact that he was one of the major formulators of Reformed theology, a theology which inspired the founders of Princeton Seminary.

Of the notable Reformed theologians of the sixteenth century perhaps none has suffered neglect more unjustly than has Peter Martyr Vermigli (1499-1562). Now at last he is beginning to receive the attention to which he is entitled.² Although historians are not accustomed to tracing the origins of Reformed theology to Lucca, it has been increasingly recognized that Vermigli was one of the leading lights from the constellation of theologians who gave formative shape to early Reformed theology. Scholars have tended to concentrate on Calvin as the standard bearer of Reformed theology, but more recent analysis has shown that a distinctive Reformed tradition emerged from the cross-fertilization of a coterie of

theologians, including Vermigli (along with Calvin, Bucer and Bullinger). As Richard Muller has rightly noted, Vermigli was one of the "codifiers" of Reformed theology.³

II. A Brief Biography

The idea of an Italian Protestant Reformer might appear at first sight to be an oxymoron. Sixteenth century Italian Roman Catholic theologians did not often become first rank Protestant Reformers. However, the career and influence of Vermigli demonstrates that such an unusual transformation did indeed occur. Pietro Martire Vermigli was born in Florence on 8 September 1499. Little is known of his early years except that he had an abiding affection for the Bible. Reflecting back on his youth in his inaugural speech at Zurich in 1556, Vermigli revealed: "For already from an early age, when I was still living in Italy I decided to pursue this one thing above the other human arts and studies—that I should learn and teach primarily the divine scriptures."⁴ Following this conviction, even though it went against the wishes of his father, Vermigli joined the Lateran Congregation of Canons Regular of St. Augustine in 1514. Academically precocious, the young Florentine was sent to study at the University of

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Padua, at that time one of the most famous universities in the world. At Padua he lived a dual intellectual existence. On the one hand, he was inundated with Aristotle in the faculty of theology at the University; but on the other hand, he imbibed Renaissance humanism at his monastery, S. Giovanni di Verdara. It was his blending of these two intellectual currents with his Augustinianism that shaped Vermigli's theology.⁵ His years of study at Padua culminated in priestly ordination and a doctorate in theology (1526). During the Italian phase of his career he was well known as a distinguished theologian, eloquent preacher and a moral reformer. He was allied with powerful Prelates under Pope Paul III, served as a consultant to the *Consilium de emendanda ecclesia* of 1537, and was appointed by Cardinal Contarini as a member of the first delegation to dialogue with Protestants at the Colloquy of Worms in 1540.

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Vermigli's theological transformation was initiated during his Neapolitan abbacy (1537-1540) by the Spanish reformist, Juan de Valdes. It was in the Valdesian circle in Naples that Vermigli encountered the Italian reform movement, first read Protestant reformers Martin Bucer and Ulrich Zwingli and embraced the pivotal doctrine of justification by faith alone. Evidence of his theological reorientation manifested itself during his Priorate in Lucca where he established "the first and last reformed theological college in pre-Tridentine Italy."⁶ However, the Papal Bull *Licet ab initio* of July 1542 reinstituted the Roman Inquisition under the iron hand of Carafa and Vermigli fled to the Protestant north.

Almost immediately after his apostasy in the summer of 1542, he found refuge with Martin Bucer in Strasbourg where he served on the Protestant faculty. Then in 1547, he heeded the call of Archbishop Cranmer to take up the Protestant cause in Oxford, where he was Regius Professor of Divinity from 1547-1553. He ended his days (1562) as Bullinger's closest colleague at the *Schola Tigurina* in Zurich. Twice Calvin invited him to Geneva, but other commitments prevented his coming. His reputation in the

Reformed Church was such that one Protestant contemporary could say, "the two most excellent theologians of our times are John Calvin and Peter Martyr."⁷

The single most impressive indication of Vermigli's importance as a theologian is the repeated publication of his books. His works went through 110 separate printings in the century following his death in 1562.⁸ Vermigli made his mark primarily as a Biblical commentator but also as an important theologian of the Reformed branch of Protestantism. He published three commentaries during his lifetime (I Corinthians, Romans and Judges), and a number of his lectures were published posthumously as commentaries (Genesis, Lamentations, I and II Samuel, I and II Kings). Vermigli also wrote theological treatises, most notably on the Eucharist. His *Defensio* against The English bishop, Stephen Gardiner, was a massive tome of impressive erudition. Calvin's esteem for Vermigli was such that he could say of this work: "The whole [doctrine of the Eucharist] was crowned by Peter Martyr, who left nothing more to be done."⁹ While Eucharistic concerns tended to predominate, Vermigli's theological interests were wide ranging. Some of the *loci* (theological essays) from his biblical commentaries were in fact substantial theological treatises. Easily the most influential of Vermigli's writings was his *Loci Communes* (Common Places), a posthumous compilation of various *loci* from his biblical commentaries arranged according to key theological topics. The *Loci Communes* was the work of Robert Masson (a French Pastor in London) who structured it to correspond with Calvin's *Institutes*. This pattern of coordination between Calvin and Vermigli reflected the prevailing conviction that two of the most important Reformed theologians of this period were in significant theological agreement.¹⁰ This theological agreement extends in large part also to the doctrine of justification.

III. Vermigli and Justification

One of the notable features of early Reformed theology was the pastoral orientation of its understanding of the doctrine of justification. There was a concerted effort, especially among the Swiss theologians, to stress the positive relationship between justification and sanctification, although they were careful not to fuse the two doctrines. Vermigli was among the leading advocates of this pastoral function of the doctrine of justification.

Vermigli's first biographer, Josiah Simler, informs us that sometime during Peter Martyr Vermigli's three years (1537-1540) in Naples "the greater light of God's truth" began to shine upon him.¹¹ There is little doubt that Simler understood this "greater

light” to be the doctrine of justification by faith alone. While in Naples Vermigli joined himself to a clandestine reform movement within the Catholic church, which included such reformists as Juan de Valdes, Marcantonio Flaminio, Gasparo Contarini and Bernardino Ochino—all of whom had been reading Protestant books.¹² Someone, probably Valdes, gave Vermigli books by Martin Bucer and Ulrich Zwingli,¹³ with the result that by the time he departed from Naples in the Spring of 1540, he had fully embraced a Protestant understanding of justification.¹⁴

The fundamental source text for Vermigli’s doctrine of justification, without question, is Paul’s epistle to the Romans. Accordingly, Vermigli’s most extensive treatment is found in the *locus* at the end of the eleventh chapter of his Romans commentary.¹⁵ Actually, Vermigli addressed this topic not once but

his excursus asserting: “This doctrine is the head, fountain and summit of all piety. Therefore one ought to be certain of it above all things.”¹⁹ His *locus* on justification develops his doctrine of justification under three propositions: that good works do not justify, that faith justifies and that faith alone justifies.²⁰ From the outset of his discussion, Vermigli sets his jaw against the perceived Pelagianism of the Catholic Church.²¹ For an Augustinian like Vermigli, whose most basic theological presupposition was that all humanity after Adam’s fall is a “*massa perditionis*” (a mass of perdition), Pelagianism would have been intolerable.²² Crucial for understanding Vermigli is the fact that the whole edifice of his doctrine of justification is built upon the foundation of an intensive Augustinian anthropology.²³ For Vermigli this was not simply a clash between individual theologians, but of theological systems.

A. Forensic Justification

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twice during his years in Oxford (1547-1553). During his lectures on I Corinthians (1548-1549), he devoted considerable space to the topic of justification in a *locus* at the end of chapter 1. And before that, he treated this subject briefly during his tenure at Strasbourg in his lectures on Genesis (15:6).¹⁶ But it is not until the Romans *locus* that Vermigli provides a comprehensive exposition of the doctrine of justification. Two reasons explain the rationale for placing his most extensive treatment of justification here. First, he believes this doctrine is taught most explicitly in Romans. Indeed, at the very beginning of the *locus*, he asserts that justification is the “scope and aim of all that Paul has said so far.”¹⁷ But second, he was fulfilling his mandate from Archbishop Cranmer to advance the cause of the Reformation in England.¹⁸ It is to this particular *locus* that we shall give primary consideration.

There is no doubt about the importance Vermigli attaches to the doctrine of justification, for he begins

In many respects, Vermigli provides a conventional Protestant understanding of justification. It is obvious from the opening section of his *locus* that justification in the strict sense is a legal pronouncement of God. Throughout his discussion, he invokes images of the sinner who “stands before the tribunal of God” and uses the legal language of judgement, verdict and pardon. He specifically employs the legal term “forensic” (*forense*) to describe this judicial proceeding.²⁴ Justification then, as he makes clear, belongs to the legal domain and, as such, addresses the theological problem of the legal guilt inherited by all Adam’s progeny and how it is that a righteous divine judge reaches a verdict of “not guilty.”

If justification is fundamentally a legal or forensic matter for Vermigli, then the question of how the guilty sinner is legally absolved of the deserved punishment comes to the fore in his thought. To describe this divine judicial proceeding, Vermigli employs the concept of imputation (*imputatio*).²⁵ In general, he sees two movements of imputation. First, there is the imputation of Christ’s righteousness to the elect sinner. Christ bore the legal penalty for Adam’s disobedience and the resulting guilt which all humanity subsequently incurred. When the divine verdict is rendered, it is not on the basis of the sinner himself, but on the basis of the imputed righteousness of Christ that he is judged.²⁶ Second, Vermigli also speaks of the non-imputation of sins. By non-imputation, he means that sins are not counted against the sinner because they have been imputed or transferred to Christ. Thus he states: “He (Christ) justifies those whom he takes to himself and bears their iniquities.”²⁷

This double imputation brings a double legal benefit—acquittal (or forgiveness) and the right to eternal life.²⁸ It is rather clear that because Christ has taken their sins and transferred his righteousness to them, sinners are thereby pronounced forgiven, hence justified. The second benefit is entrance into a new relationship with the divine judge.²⁹ Vermigli remarks that the “chief and principle part” of forgiveness of our sins is “that we are received into the favor of God.”³⁰ For him, this acceptance into the favor of God is particularly identified with adoption, which also has a legal connotation. He writes: “...there is no doubt that justification [brings] ... the favor of God by which men are received into grace, adopted as his children and made heirs of eternal life.”³¹ With the acceptance idea, Vermigli’s understanding of justification is not merely forensic, it also entails a “relational” component.³²

*Crucial for understanding
Vermigli is the fact that the whole
edifice of his doctrine of justification
is built upon the foundation
of an intensive
Augustinian anthropology.*

It is significant that his forensic understanding of imputation necessarily requires an extrinsic view of justification. That is to say, the act in which Christ’s righteousness is imputed to an elect sinner only has reference to his legal status. It is external to the sinner and does not itself bring inner renewal. The imputed righteousness of Christ, technically speaking, does not penetrate and transform the soul of the sinner as is required in the Catholic notion of *gratia inhaerens* (also called *infusa gratia*), but remains external to the sinner. Justification then, in the forensic sense, is not a *iustitia in nobis* but a *iustitia extra nos*.³³

John Patrick Donnelly has observed that Vermigli never actually employs the distinctive phrase *simul iustus et peccator* (simultaneously justified and sinner).³⁴ However, this is somewhat misleading, for the idea is clearly present in the *locus*. (It is perhaps worth noting that neither does Calvin employ the phrase *simul iustus et peccator* in the 1559 edition of the *Institutes*, yet he unmistakably embraces the idea).³⁵ At the very beginning of Vermigli’s *locus*, he clearly affirms the idea of *simul iustus et peccator* when he writes: “to justify’ means to ascribe right-

eousness to one by judgement or declaration [and] does not make him righteous in reality....”³⁶ Vermigli’s intensive Augustinian anthropology, with its stress on the radical impact of sin on all humanity (including infants),³⁷ presses him to conclude that even the regenerate still must contend with sinful behavior. To be sure, the regenerate person is no longer under the dominion of sin, but the struggle with sin still lingers. Augustinian anthropology again determines his stance on this question.

B. Three-fold Righteousness

Certainly, Vermigli’s understanding of forensic justification is not particularly unusual. Indeed, it corresponds generally with the Reformed branch of Protestantism. What is unusual is the inclusion of regeneration and sanctification under the rubric of justification. Like his friend and mentor, Martin Bucer, Vermigli espouses a three-fold justification, which includes three distinguishable but inseparable components: regeneration, justification and sanctification. This threefold character of his doctrine of justification is found in his earliest treatment of this doctrine in his Strasbourg exposition of Genesis (1543)³⁸ as well as his 1548 lectures on I Corinthians in Oxford.

The relationship between regeneration and forensic justification is particularly crucial for determining whether one is a Catholic or a Protestant. Alister McGrath has argued that: “the notional distinction between *iustificatio* and *regeneratio* provides one of the best *differentiae* between Catholic and Protestant understandings of justification....”³⁹ Indeed, it is precisely because Vermigli places regeneration in such close proximity to forensic justification that Klaus Sturm has characterized him as a “*Reformkatholik*”⁴⁰.

Although forensic justification is the primary understanding of Vermigli, there is, for him, a further consideration, which necessarily accompanies any full and proper biblical understanding of justification. He states that God confers righteousness upon humanity in two general ways, by “producing righteousness in men” and by “imputing righteousness in us.” Regarding the former (internal righteousness), Vermigli sees two manifestations. First, he says that God produces this internal righteousness “by his Spirit” who “refashions and wholly renews” a person. This also restores “the power of their minds and delivers their faculties from much of their natural corruption.”⁴¹ Hence, through the working of the Holy Spirit, an internal righteousness is produced in an individual. It is clear from his description that he has regeneration in view, that is, the initial point at which God begins to bring about redemption in the life of an individual.

Vermigli says “this is the righteousness which first clings and adheres to our minds by the blessing of God through Christ.”⁴² Characteristically, he places forensic justification in close proximity to regeneration.⁴³

The second manifestation of this divinely conferred internal righteousness necessarily follows regeneration and forensic justification and has to do with subsequent “good and holy works.” Toward the end of the *locus*, he cites Augustine with approval when he speaks of a “righteousness which adheres to us.”⁴⁴ But immediately, he clarifies that “here we do not treat that justification which is by imputation, but that which we attain after regeneration.”⁴⁵ According to Vermigli, regeneration creates a habit (*habitus*) or predisposition, which inclines a person “to live honestly and uprightly.”⁴⁶ This second manifestation of divinely conferred internal righteousness is nothing other than sanctification, that is, the life-long process by which the Christian progressively grows in holiness and obedience.

What is remarkable is that when he offers a definition of justification, he includes both sanctification and regeneration. It is clear, that for Vermigli, there is a very close relationship between justification, regeneration and sanctification. He writes:

“we may say that justification is the only foundation of eternal salvation and yet it is far from the blessedness for which we long. And the first step toward salvation is to be accepted by God in grace and to be regenerated through Christ. And afterwards we take more steps by which we come to that highest good for which we long.”⁴⁷

From this it seems that Vermigli embraces both a narrow, strictly forensic understanding of justification, as well as a broader, moral understanding, which stresses the necessary relationship between forensic justification and its accompanying benefits of regeneration and sanctification. It needs to be noted that while these blessings cannot be separated, they can be distinguished. When speaking of justification in the strict or proper sense (*propria significatione*), he has in view only the divine acquittal and its basis. He states: “we say justification [forensic] cannot consist in that righteousness and renewal by which we are recreated by God, since our corruption renders it imperfect so that we are not able to stand before the judgement of Christ.”⁴⁸ The righteousness, then, by which one is forensically justified “does not adhere [*inhaere*] to our souls, but is imputed by God.”⁴⁹ But when speaking more broadly of justification, he considers both the cause and the effect of the divine acquittal. Forensic justification, which is based on the imputed righteousness of Christ alone, is necessarily preceded by the regenerative work of the Holy Spirit,

who then produces sanctification or moral transformation in the sinner.

It is this close proximity of forensic justification with regeneration and sanctification that gives rise to Klaus Sturm’s categorization of Vermigli as a “*Reformkatholik*”. Now we again need to proceed with caution here. Vermigli does indeed include a transformational element under the broad rubric of justification. He cannot conceive of justification as a legal declaration, which is not necessarily accompanied by a moral transformation.⁵⁰ For Vermigli, the proper understanding of justification is one that includes both the act and its consequences; its cause and effects, hence he feels compelled to speak of a three-fold righteousness

What is remarkable is that when Vermigli offers a definition of justification, he includes both sanctification and regeneration. It is clear that for Vermigli, there is a very close relationship between justification, regeneration and sanctification. It is this close proximity of forensic justification with regeneration and sanctification that gives rise to the appellation, ‘Reformkatholik.’

IV. Concluding Thoughts

Vermigli certainly saw himself as a Protestant and as an opponent of Catholicism, as his rejection of Trent suggests.⁵¹ Not only was he a Protestant in his own mind, but he was acknowledged as such by opponents and supporters alike. Like many other Reformed Protestants, he taught that justification, regeneration, and sanctification were distinct but not separate. Moreover, at the crucial point, he recognizes that the basis for forensic justification is not an internal infused righteousness of the individual, but the external imputed righteousness of Christ alone. It is this core idea that makes Vermigli a full-fledged Protestant and accounts for his opposition to Catholic views of justification.

He does indeed differ from Luther by placing the principle of “distinct but separate” at the forefront of his formulation rather than stressing the discontinuity of justification and sanctification as expressed in the phrase *simul iustus et peccator*. It is, however, essentially the same doctrine with different stresses. It is important to recognize that early Protestant conceptions of justification were more fluid and nuanced than is generally understood. If we are to interpret Vermigli in context, we must appreciate that different emphases among the Reformers do not entail different doctrines.

Although his formulation differs from Luther, Vermigli is generally in accord with other Protestant theologians of his day, such as Bucer, Oecolampadius, Zwingli and later Melancthon.⁵² Vermigli’s own distinctive juxtaposition of justification, regeneration and sanctification especially resonates with Martin Bucer, with whom Vermigli spent his first five years as a Protestant. There is little doubt that five years with Bucer in Strasbourg (1542-1547), goes a long way to explain his three-fold conception of justification.⁵³

End Notes

¹ Mark A. Noll, ed., *The Princeton Theology, 1812-1921* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1983), p. 29.

² *The Peter Martyr Library*, an English translation of his works is being published under the general editorship of J.P. Donnelly, Frank A. James III, and Joseph C. McLelland. For a one volume sampling of Vermigli’s work see *The Peter Martyr Reader*, eds., J.P. Donnelly, Frank A. James III and Joseph C. McLelland (Kirkville, MO., Truman State University Press, 1999).

³ Richard Muller, *Post-Reformation Dogmatics* (Grand Rapids, Baker Book House, 1987), I, p. 14.

⁴ J.P. Donnelly, editor and translator, *Life, Letters and Sermons*. Peter Martyr Library 5 (Kirkville, MO., Thomas Jefferson University Press, 1999), p. 322.

⁵ Frank A. James III, “Peter Martyr Vermigli: At the Crossroads of Late Medieval Scholasticism, Christian Humanism and Resurgent Augustinianism,” in *Protestant Scholasticism: Essays in Reassessment*, edited by C.R. Truman and R.S. Clark (Carlisle, Cumbria: Paternoster Press, 1999), pp. 62-78.

⁶ Philip McNair, *Peter Martyr in Italy: An Anatomy of Apostasy* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1967), p. 221.

⁷ Gordon Huelin, “Peter Martyr and the English Reformation,” (unpublished dissertation, University of London, 1955), p. 178.

⁸ J.P. Donnelly, *Calvinism and Scholasticism in Vermigli’s Doctrine of Man and Grace* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1976), p. 171.

⁹ Cited by Joe McLelland, “The Reformed Doctrine of Predestination according to Peter Martyr,” *Scottish Journal of Theology* 8 (1955), p. 257.

¹⁰ This arrangement is splendidly maintained in the modern edition of the *Institutes*, edited by John T. McNeill and translated by Ford Lewis Battles.

¹¹ Josiah Simler, *Oratio de vita et obitu viri optimi praestantissimi Theologi D. Peteri Martyris Vermiglii, Sacrarum literarum in schola Tigurina Professoris* (Zurich, 1563), p. 9.

¹² Frank A. James III, “Juan de Valdés Before and After Peter Martyr Vermigli: The Reception of *Gemina Praedestinatio* in Valdés Later Thought,” *Archiv für Reformationsgeschichte* 83 (1992), pp. 180-208.

¹³ Simler, *Oratio*, p. 4.

¹⁴ McNair, *Peter Martyr in Italy*, p. 179.

¹⁵ Donnelly, *Calvinism and Scholasticism*, p. 149.

¹⁶ Klaus Sturm, *Die Theologie Peter Martyr Vermigli während seines ersten Aufenthalts in Strassburg 1542-1547* (Neukirchen: Neukirchener Verlag, 1971), pp. 58-70 looks at the *locus* on justification in Vermigli’s Genesis commentary.

¹⁷ *In Epistolam S. Pauli Apostoli ad Romanos commentarij... doctissimi* (Basel: P. Perna, 1558), p. 517.

¹⁸ Philip M. J. McNair, “Biographical Introduction,” in *Early Writings: Creed, Scripture and Church*, Peter Martyr Library 1, edited by J.C. McLelland (Kirkville, MO., Thomas Jefferson University Press, 1994), p. 9.

¹⁹ *Romanos*, p. 521.

²⁰ *Romanos*, p. 520.

²¹ I have explored this theological tension between Vermigli and Albertus Pighius regarding the doctrine of justification in a paper delivered at the International Symposium on Peter Martyr Vermigli: Humanism, Republicanism and Reformation, 5-7 July, 1999, sponsored by the Institut für Schweizerische Reformationsgeschichte, the University of Zurich, Switzerland.

²² *Romanos*, p. 523.

²³ One finds the same intensive Augustinianism in his doctrine of predestination, see James, *Peter Martyr Vermigli and Predestination: The Augustinian Heritage of an Italian Refomer*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), pp. 245ff.

²⁴ *Romanos*, p. 517.

²⁵ *Romanos*, 517. Alister McGrath has argued that this legal term “imputation” has its origins in Erasmus’ *Novum instrumentum omne* of 1516 where he replaced the term “*reputatum*” of the Vulgate translation of Romans 4:5 with “*imputatum*.” Cf. McGrath, *Iustitia Dei: A History of the Christian Doctrine of Justification* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), II, pp. 31-32.

²⁶ *Romanos*, p. 565.

²⁷ *Romanos*, p. 553.

²⁸ *Romanos*, p. 558.

²⁹ *In selectissimam D. Pauli Priorem ad Corinth. Epistolam Commentarij* (Zurich: C. Froschauer, 1579), fols. 16r and 18v.

³⁰ *Romanos*, p. 558: “*recipiamus a Deo in gratiam*.”

³¹ *Romanos*, p. 525.

³² McGrath, *Iustitia Dei*, I, p. 33.

³³ McGrath, *Iustitia Dei*, II, p. 20.

³⁴ Donnelly, *Calvinism and Scholasticism*, p. 154. “Martyr never uses Luther’s phrase *simul iustus et peccator*, not only because of its paradoxical expression is foreign to his mentality, but also because it does not square with his understanding of justification by faith alone.”

³⁵ John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, III.14.9. (McNeill ed., vol. I, p. 776).

³⁶ *Romanos*, 517: “*...ut iustificare est iudicio ac existimatione iustitiam alicui tribuere, non autem reipsa efficere ut sit iustus*.”

³⁷ *Romanos*, p. 523. Vermigli follows Augustine by including infants under the Adamic fall.

³⁸ James, *Peter Martyr Vermigli and Predestination*, p. 49.

³⁹ McGrath, *Iustitia Dei*, II, p. 186: “the essential feature of the Reformation doctrines of justification is that a deliberate and systematic distinction is made between justification and regeneration.”

⁴⁰ Sturm, p. 69.

⁴¹ *Romanos*, p. 517.

⁴² *Romanos*, p. 517.

⁴³ *Romanos*, p. 552.

⁴⁴ *Romanos*, p. 578.

⁴⁵ *Romanos*, p. 578.

⁴⁶ *Romanos*, p. 517.

⁴⁷ *Romanos*, p. 560. cf. Vermigli, in opposition to Stephen Gardiner, Bishop of Winchester, stresses that the real dispute between Catholics and Protestants on justification “is not about any righteousness which ... adheres in us... , but about the righteousness which is the forgiveness of sins.” (*Romanos*, p. 579).

⁴⁸ *Romanos*, p. 548.

⁴⁹ *Romanos*, p. 522.

⁵⁰ *Romanos*, p. 539.

⁵¹ *Romanos*, pp. 546-548.

⁵² McGrath, *Iustitia Dei*, II, 32-35.

⁵³ W. P. Stephens, *The Holy Spirit in the Theology of Martin Bucer* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970), pp. 48-70.

Who Was Robert Speer?

by William Miller

Every day students at Princeton Theological Seminary meander through one of the greatest collections of theological works in the history of Christendom: Speer Library. Before the name of Speer conjures up images of taxing research and long nights of reading, however, it should call to mind one of the greatest evangelists of the 20th century. These excerpts come from an article written by William Miller in 1967. For our Princeton readers, we hope it will impress upon your mind the world outside the library. For all our readers, we hope it reminds you of your own Christian heroes, and inspires you to spread the good news of Jesus Christ.

Robert Elliott Speer was born in Huntingdon, Pennsylvania on September 10, 1867. After attending Phillips Academy in Andover, Massachusetts, he entered Princeton University in 1885. In answer to the prayers of a group of students a revival came that year to Princeton, and Robert Speer became a member of the Presbyterian church. In Speer's sophomore year Robert Wilder and John Forman, recent graduates of Princeton, returned to their alma mater to challenge students to volunteer for missionary service. Following the famous Mt. Hermon (MA) Conference of July 1886, when one hundred delegates decided to become foreign missionaries, Wilder and Forman in eight months visited 162 colleges. By the end of their tour, more than 2000 students had signed the declaration, "I am willing and desirous, God permitting, to become a foreign missionary." Thus began the Student Volunteer Movements for Foreign Missions.

At Princeton, one of the men who signed the declaration was Robert Speer. It had been Speer's ambition to become a lawyer like his father, and one day to be a judge of the Supreme Court. But when he heard Christ's call, he left all and followed Him. From that time to the end of his life Robert Speer devoted himself and all his talents to the service of Christ.

In 1890 Speer entered Princeton Theological Seminary, but he did not complete the course. For in his second year an urgent invitation came to him from the Board of Foreign Missions of the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. to become an executive secretary of the board. Believing this to be God's call, he left the seminary and in 1891, at the age of twenty-four, began his service with the board. In this position he remained until his retirement forty-six years later.

In 1893 Robert E. Speer and Emma Doll Bailey were united in marriage, a union indeed arranged in Heaven. Their home became a heaven on earth.

From his student days, Robert Speer exercised an amazing influence on students and young people. He was tall and handsome, with a brilliant mind, a heart full of the love of Christ and a voice that shook men's souls. Whenever he spoke in schools or colleges the effect was tremendous. Many said he was the greatest preacher and the most eloquent missionary speaker they had ever listened to. "His ardent zeal for missions," writes Dr. John Mackay, "communicated to youth with subjugating eloquence, enlisted more men and women for Christ's service than any voice in the last hundred years."

Early in life Robert Speer began to write books. His writings, no less than addresses, exercised a profound influence on both young and old. His first book was published in 1892; his last in 1946. During this period of fifty-four years, he wrote and edited sixty-seven books. Subjects included studies in the Bible, discussions of missionary policies and problems, biographies, studies in the principles of the Christian faith, and especially of the person, character, and finality of Jesus Christ.

Probably most of the young people who were such ardent admirers of Dr. Speer, the great speaker at con-

The article "Christ's Man" first appeared in The Sunday Times, Vol. 108, no. 53. Its author, W.M. Miller, was himself an evangelist of great faith and travels. Dr. Samuel Moffet of PTS calls him one of the "generation of giants that gave as its legacy to church history what many have called the greatest single Christian movement of the last two centuries—the modern missionary movement." If you are interested in William Miller's autobiography, contact William Carey Library, P.O. Box 4129, Pasadena, CA 91114.

ferences, did not realize that the task that occupied the greater part of his time was administration of the foreign mission work of his church. Under his wise, efficient leadership the number of the board's missionaries increased from 155 in 1891, to 1606 in the year 1927. In the same period, gifts to the board from living sources increased from about a quarter of a million dollars a year to over four million dollars a year.

The Board of Foreign Missions of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) became the strongest Protestant missionary agency in the world. Though he never would have taken to himself the credit for this achievement, it is well-known that Robert Speer was God's chief instrument in bringing about this mighty missionary advance.

Not only did Dr. Speer travel a great deal in America, but from time to time he also made much longer journeys to the Near east, India, East Asia, and South America to visit the various missions which he supervised. Everywhere he went he brought encouragement, wisdom and blessing. A friend who accompanied him to China said he heard Dr. Speer speak 180 times without once repeating and address.

In 1927 he was elected moderator of the General Assembly of his church and helped to lead the church through a very difficult period of its history. For ten years he was president of the board of trustees of Princeton Theological Seminary. Though never ordained as a minister, Robert Speer was given the degree of Doctor of Divinity by Edinburgh University. No man ever deserved this honor more than he.

In accordance with the rules of the General Assembly, Dr. Speer at the age of seventy retired from his position as Senior Secretary of the Board of Foreign Missions. An effort was made to induce him to remain longer, but he refused. It is said that after September 10, 1937 he never once entered the board rooms at 156 Fifth Avenue, New York, where he had labored for so long.

During the ten years that followed his retirement, Dr. Speer lived a fruitful life, writing books, making addresses, and enjoying his home and garden in Connecticut. At the age of 77 he wrote to a friend: "The year has been a busy one. I have been all over the country, in some thirty-six states, speaking at all kinds of gatherings—colleges, conferences, churches, dinners. I think I have made some 244 addresses, more even than when I was supposed to be in active service."

To the very end of his life, he continued to serve his Lord, his last public address being given on November 5, 1947. He died November 23, in a hospital bed in Bryn Mawr, PA. In his final address Dr. Speer quoted a poem by Christina Rossetti, that expressed the secret of his life:

None other lamb, none other Name,
None other Hope in Heaven or earth or sea,
None other Hiding Place from guilt and shame,
None beside thee.

Lord, Thou art Life,
though I be dead;
Love's fire thou art, however cold I be;
Nor heaven have I, nor place
to lay my head,
Nor home, but thee.

In Christ Robert Speer lived. In Christ he died.

Robert Speer in Iran

I should like to become quite personal and describe the impression Robert Speer made on me when I was a young man. I saw him the first time in July, 1912, at the Student conference in Northfield (MA). On the closing day of the conference, Dr. Speer preached on a text from 2 Corinthians 4:6—"the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." He said we do not know how Jesus looked, but however he looked, incarnation was the Gospel. The Gospel, he told us, was not ethics, or even religion, but was Christ. In Him we must see God, and into His face we must ever look.

Never have I forgotten that sermon. I can see Dr. Speer now as he stood there before us in the auditorium, a heavenly light shining from his noble face, his voice like the sound of many waters. In that hour Robert Speer became for me the living image of his Master. I saw Christ in him.

Six years later it was to Dr. Speer that I applied to be sent an evangelistic missionary to Meshed, the sacred city of the Moslems of Persia (Iran), where a mission station had recently been established. Great was my joy when I was appointed by the Board of Foreign Missions and assigned to Meshed! Situated in the northeast corner of Iran, near the border of Afghanistan and Russian Turkestan, Meshed was 560 miles from Teheran, where the nearest mission station was located. The road from Teheran to Meshed was made for camels and donkeys, not for cars, and the best mode of travel was by post carriage. So it was a rare and memorable occasion when a visitor from the outside world came to Meshed. In 1922 other missionaries and I were carrying on medical and evangelistic work in Meshed. The city was a center of Moslem fanaticism, the difficulties we encountered were many and great, and progress in making Christ known to the people in establishing a church was very slow.

One day word came to us that Robert E. Speer was going to visit us! He, along with other officers of the

board, had visited the missions in India and were to spend some time in Iran before returning to America. Dr. Speer was hastening to reach America in time for the meeting of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church, where he was to give his report. Yet he felt it worth the time and effort to spend three weeks and travel more than 1,100 miles in the dead of winter in order to visit a half-dozen young missionaries in a remote station.

They made the journey to Meshed in a heavy carriage drawn by four horses. The passengers, wrapped in sheepskin coats, sat facing one another, with their knees locked. Horses and drivers were changed every fifteen miles so the party could keep going day and night. They stopped to sleep only two nights, reaching Meshed after eight days and six nights of bumping along the rough road. Their exhaustion can well be imagined.

But when Dr. Speer stepped out of the carriage, he greeted us with a great loving smile. It seemed he actually *enjoyed* the journey immensely!

*'His ardent zeal for missions,
communicated to youth with
subjugating eloquence,
enlisted more men and women
for Christ's service than any
voice in the last hundred years.'*

— Dr. John Mackay

Soon after his arrival, Dr. Speer spoke to us in our station meeting. He confessed that on the long journey he had found it difficult to keep his mind on any definite theme, so he had just tried to "remember Jesus Christ," as Paul had urged Timothy to do (2 Tim. 2:8). Then he shared with us the wonderful thoughts about our Lord that had come to him along the way.

For five days Dr. Speer gave himself wholly to us. He seemed to have nothing in the world to do except to become acquainted with Meshed and its opportunities and problems; to share our joys and sorrows; to meet our friends; to encourage us to go on with Christ's work. His chief interest was not in our property needs, which were urgent, but in how we were endeavoring to make Christ known to the Moslems.

A year before Dr. Speer's visit, a small group of Moslems had been baptized in Meshed and a tiny church had come into existence. He was eager to meet these new believers and learn what had drawn them to Christ! As they sat about him on the floor, in Persian fashion, and told their several stories through an interpreter, Dr. Speer wrote down all they said. He later published in full their testimonies in his 250-page report of this visit to Persia.

The Iranians were as happy to meet their brother from America as he was to know them. One of them, an old man with a white beard by the name of Yahya (John the Baptist), welcomed Dr. Speer on his arrival by throwing his arms about him and kissing him on both cheeks. The greeting was returned with as much feeling as it was given. Every one was drawn to Dr. Speer by the love of Christ that radiated from him.

When I saw Dr. Speer in America swaying multitudes of students with his inspired eloquence, I knew he was great. But I never saw him as great as when he visited us in Meshed. All during his stay, Paul's words in Philippians 2:8 kept coming to my mind, "he humbled himself." Truly Dr. Speer had the mind and heart of his Master.

A heavy snow fell, and when our friends departed on February 13, the weather was very cold. Before they had gone one-third of the way to Teheran, the old carriage in which they were riding had literally fallen to pieces. There was no way of reaching their destination except by getting on the post wagon and traveling the remaining four hundred miles in this springless, uncovered vehicle. We were told that when Dr. Speer finally reached one of the warm missionary homes in Teheran, he collapsed on the couch. After a few days of rest and work, the party was off again. One of my precious treasures is a well-worn pocket Testament and Psalms which Dr. Speer carried with him on this journey through Iran in 1922, given me after his death by Mrs. Speer. Between many of the pages are bits of flowers or leaves picked up in different places, and laid beside appropriate verses. Beside John 4:35, which speaks of the fields white to harvest, Dr. Speer had placed a bit of white straw someone had brought him from across the border of Afghanistan.

In my sorrows and joys, Dr. Speer wrote loving letters in his own hand. He always remembered by name people he had met and experiences he had had in Iran years before.

In 1967, the centennial of his birth, as reference is made to his writings, his messages, and his person, the voice of Robert E. Speer will be heard again—calling us to remember Jesus Christ and to live in and for Him—and pleading with us to show our love to Him by making disciples of all nations.

Poetry

THE DROUGHT

Now that the years of the century
Begin to decrease and fade
As rapidly as the penury
Rises beyond the makeshift graves being laid
Throughout the deserts of Africa
And the grate tops of America,
Congregations everywhere
Shout out "*No More!*" and "*No More!*"
While minds wonder "What sins will domineer
Our lives,
What evils, alas, will mind the store?"

Dark, as dark now as the cold is dark
And no more, a broken man
Sits in a church with his face of chalk,
Dreaming only of a fount that would moisten
The dry famished feather of his brow,
Yet through the sanctuary a sough
Unravels, having escaped
His lips, one of disbelief
That even though history has reshaped
Our lives,
Grief's more to religion than belief.

Thus our lives, dictated more by doubt
Than by hearts left in arrears,
Are plagued forevermore by this drought.
Bowing forward, leaning into grace, he hears
No simple words that could guide us through
The whys and wherefores of what to do,
No untying of hands tied,
Yet even He who such long
Centuries and long stories ago fled
Our lives
Can wrangle from my lips this one song.
Good and earnest fellows, this man knows,
We all know, the greatest fears,
We all fear that if the one faith goes
Fury, without much ado, would clog our ears
Against the commandments and lessons,
Against the plaint of heaving bosoms,
But the grief would never flee.
There's no greater religion
Than a religion bred by poverty.
Our lives
Will learn no other consolation.

—Susan Bullock

Sermon

Ralph C. Wood

The Scandal of Our Redemption

First Presbyterian Church
Kerrville, Texas
March 21, 1999

"Blessed is he who takes no offense at me."
Luke 7:18-23

Jesus utters one of the strangest sayings in the New Testament when, in Luke 7:23, he declares: "Blessed is he who takes no offense at me." What makes this saying so strange is that Jesus has just been reminding the disciples of John the Baptist about the mighty and miraculous deeds they have seen him perform: how he made the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers clean, the deaf hear, the dead rise up, and the poor hear the gospel. Then he adds those odd words about the blessedness of those whom He does not offend. Jesus' baffling sentence can be translated even more literally as "Happy are those who are not scandalized by me." Such a rendering makes things even worse. Who would be scandalized at Christ's wondrous works of goodness and grace? Aren't Jesus' saving acts of rescue and release the very things we all want and need? Why would anyone be take offense them? Isn't it the mark of a confused professor—indeed, the sign of an egg-head whose brains have been fatally scrambled—that he should come to declare "The Scandal of Our Redemption"? Shouldn't we insist, instead, that salvation in Jesus Christ is something soothing and comforting, something consoling and cheering, something inoffensive and unscandalous?

If there is any excuse for the double whammy to which you are about to be subjected, you can blame it on John Calvin. I confess that I take my own theologi-

cal bearings, at least indirectly, from this first and most original and incisive of all Presbyterians. Yet Calvin has suffered the worst press of any theologian in the history of the Christian church. He is remembered chiefly for burning Servetus at the stake, and for setting up a rigid theocracy in Geneva, where both public and private life was strictly governed. While such horrors and excesses cannot be excused, we ought to have instinctive sympathy with Calvin—if only because the poor man suffered from hemorrhoids and yet was compelled to travel almost entirely by horseback.

Many people persist in regarding Calvin as so joyless a creature that he must have eaten grass for breakfast and crunched dirt for dessert. One of my atheist friends says that he doesn't believe in God because all our Christian gabbing about the love of God seems to him but so much wishful thinking, the desire of lonely and desperate people to find comfort and hope when there is none. Yet this same atheist friend also confesses that, if he ever *is* converted, he will become a Calvinist. "Why?" I asked in puzzlement. "Because," he replied, "nobody could have thought up anything as crazy as Calvinism!" Calvin's portraits do indeed depict him as a dour and glum figure, with his narrow face and pointed beard making him look quite formidable. No wonder that the American satirist H. L. Mencken defined Calvinists (i.e. Puritans) as those gloomy souls who go about in the dread fear that

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somewhere, somehow, somebody might be happy.

I have come to declare that it just ain't so. Calvin is pre-eminently a theologian of grace. Few people know that Calvin described Christians as *les bonnairs*—the good-natured and glad-hearted. Calvin was so debonair, in fact, that when his friends urged him to join Luther and the other Reformers in finding himself a wife, Calvin instructed them to go pick out one. They did and he married her, a widow with a child. Calvin was also debonair about death. So little was he concerned about his posterity that he didn't bother to designate a burial place or to set up a monument. Even until this day, we don't know where Calvin is interred in the Geneva cemetery. Hence my contention that John Calvin was the debonair apostle of Jesus Christ because he proclaimed the Redemption that is supremely happy because it is supremely scandalous.

I. The Twin Parties Scandalized by God's Grace

Why does Jesus warn that he is likely to give offense? I believe that it is precisely because he performs mighty works of deliverance. We resent these miracles of transformation because they represent a terrible threat to our own sufficiency. We want to save ourselves. We don't want anyone else to liberate us. We dread the wonder of restored sight and hearing, the miracles of ambulation and healing and newness of life, above all the staggering surprise of good news being preached the poor. All such deliverances set us and the world in utter dependence on Jesus Christ. This is what we don't want, and so we are scandalized and offended when he makes these things the very marks of his Kingdom.

There are two chief kinds of offended and scandalized folks. First, there are those many souls who seem to get along quite well by themselves. We call them humanists and secularists. Surely we all have friends who are not worshipping God on this Sunday morning. They see no need to confess sin or to seek redemption. They have made their way through life by their own wits and gumption. A minister is supposed to have asked the dying Henry David Thoreau whether he had made his peace with God. Thoreau gave the preacher a supremely witty and pagan answer: "I wasn't aware that we had ever quarreled." Our secular neighbors have no quarrel with God because they have no concern with God. They find sufficient satisfaction in their friends and families, in their homes and gardens, in their movies and sports, in their volunteer work at the schools and in the civic clubs.

One of my friends recently confessed that his own "church of choice" is Habitat for Humanity. To such humanists, all of our God-bothering is a foolish extravagance, a huge waste of money and time. They ar-

gue that our massive expenditures on preachers and teachers and musicians, on lovely sanctuaries and elaborate services, could be much better spent on the hungry and the homeless—those who have real material needs as most of us do not. The poor don't need to have the gospel preached to them; they need bread and jobs. The moral and self-sacrificing humanists who make such claims are rightly scandalized by the Christian claim that their lives have lasting worth only in relation to Jesus Christ. They are justly offended by the declaration that He alone is the way, the truth, and the life. They are understandably outraged at the command to get off their Habitat for Humanity ladders and to come crack their knees at the altar of God.

Lest we Christians take any comfort in the discomfort of our heathen neighbors and friends, we should remind ourselves that we too are offended at Jesus Christ. We are scandalized in subtle, even deeply reli-

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gious ways. We believe that our religious works can compel God's grace and favor, thus allowing us to earn our salvation in the church. And so we read our Bibles diligently, we pray regularly, we go to church frequently, we volunteer for committees and activities, we even tithe our gross rather than our net income—all in the confident conviction that, since we have been good, God had better be good to us. This is called the pietist ploy: the more pious we are, the more we are tempted to think that God owes us something. We usually think that God owes us prosperity and health and happiness.

Unless we Christians are ever so careful, our faith becomes a strangely selfish proposition. We are tempted to think that, because we have sacrificed so much for God, surely He will spare us the ails and ills of mortal flesh. Surely our marriages won't fail, surely our health won't break, surely our jobs won't end, and surely our children won't cause us endless trouble. When such things happen, as they inevitably do, we are often offended, even scandalized at the Christ who has not spared us. One of my former students who

had given herself for a religious vocation changed her mind when, after long and fervent prayers, one of her best friends died from the injuries he had suffered in a freak accident. Why should she serve a God who would not intervene to save this young life full of so much goodness and promise? Thus do we scandalized Christians join Rabbi Kushner in asking why bad things happen to good people.

II. *Prevenient Grace*

Though the Book of Job and the Psalms of Lament ask this question ever so insistently, it is not really the profound question. The rightly offensive question is “Why do good things happen to bad people?” Why, indeed, has the supremely Good Thing—the unbounded love and mercy of God in Jesus Christ—happened to such utterly undeserving creatures as us? It

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was Calvin who, among the Reformers of the 16th century, had the clearest answer to this question and thus the clearest mind about the scandal of our redemption. Following St. Paul and St. Augustine, Calvin taught that God’s grace is always *prevenient*. This a fancy Latinate word which means simply that God’s grace comes before and thus enables every good thing that we can imagine or perform, even as it constrains us from the evils that we in our sinful nature would otherwise do. T. S. Eliot indulges in a wonderful pun when, in *Four Quartets*, he speaks of “the grace that prevents us everywhere.”

Permit me a personal instance of *prevenient* grace. I confess that, insofar as I escaped the usual temptations and torments of adolescence, it was not because I was a pious and righteous youth, the proverbial goody two-shoes. As my childhood friends can copiously attest, I was just as mean and selfish as the next brat was. Yet if I managed to avoid some of the more obvious teenage calamities, it was for one reason only: because I had a large regard for my parents. I knew that they were such good and generous people that I did want to violate them. I was not afraid of them so much as I respected them and thus wanted to honor them. It is true, of course, that there were other youths in my hometown who also had good parents and who yet dishonored them. Grace never coerces; it always urges our glad response. No one forced my acts of filial reverence. Yet my freedom to be faithful came not from myself; it was enabled by my parents’ free gift of themselves. Unless their goodness had *prevented* and made possible my own, I would not have sought a similar sort of grace for myself. As St. Paul puts it ever so sharply, there can be absolutely no boasting—except through the giver of all grace, Jesus Christ.

John Calvin made a similar point when he observed that the New Testament records both Jesus and John the Baptist as having called their followers to “Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand.” But what the New Testament really means, Calvin candidly added, is exactly the opposite: “The Kingdom of Heaven is at hand; therefore, repent.” The difference is subtle but huge. We are not *forced* to repent in order to receive God’s grace and forgiveness as a consequence of our contrition. We *want* to repent because Christ has taken our sins upon himself that we might be freed from them. We do not work and worship in the expectation that God will reward us because we have been righteous. We seek to live in faithful obedience to Christ—glorifying God and enjoying him forever—because he has already made us righteous for his own sake. What divides us from our humanist and secularist friends, therefore, is that they do not know the real source of either their delights or their duties. They believe that these delights and duties are of their own doing, whereas we Christians are convinced, by contrast, that they come from the *prevenient* grace of God.

III. *Predestination*

It should be evident that I am stressing the utter priority and *prevenience* of God’s grace because I believe it lies at the heart of our scandalous redemption in Jesus Christ. “You did not choose me,” Jesus says to his disciples in John 15:16; “but I chose you.” Paul is even more emphatic: “Those whom he foreknew he

also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son. And those whom he predestined he also called; and those whom he called he also justified; and those whom he justified he also glorified" (Romans 8:29-30). Here lies the true north of the Calvinist doctrine called predestination—the dread P-word that even Presbyterians have become loath to use. It is not hard to understand why Calvinists have fallen silent about their central dogma. We live in a culture of personal choices, and we worship at the throne of individual preferences. The shopping mall and the cafeteria line are our ideal images of what freedom means: we believe that we are free whenever we can choose for ourselves whatever we want, without anyone telling us what we ought to do. It should come as a shock to us that our Christian ancestors thought this notion of

wolves of sin. We have entered upon a dreadful path that permits no u-turns. Sin is both irreversible and incurable by our own powers. St. Paul says that we are dead in our sins and trespasses. St. Augustine reminds us that corpses don't eventually get tired of their graves, and then decide to rise up out of them. We lie dead, alas, in the Procrustean bed of sin that we have so sorrily made for ourselves.

Sin is as pervasive as a blood disease. Nothing remains uninfected by our own selfish will. With his typically graphic imagination, Luther said that leprosy is not cured pustule by pustule. Like a crimson stain, sin taints everything that we do. As I tell my students—to their considerable relief!—we commit sin not only from the waist down but, far more fatally, from the neck up. To give our fallen human wills unconstrained free choice, therefore, is not to emancipate but to entrap them. Such sinful "preferences" enable us but to spin ever more elaborate spider webs of our own bondage. This explains why I sometimes use the shopping mall as a convenient image of Hell when I teach Dante's *Divine Comedy*. As in the 13th century, so now: the damned often ambulate in endless repetitive circles, their eyes not blazing in agony but glazed over in boredom and emptiness. No wonder that the late Walker Percy described late-modern America as the place where we can buy everything but get nothing fixed.

Agreeing again with Paul, Calvin taught something even more drastic and scandalous. He taught that we sin against God even more heinously in our good deeds than in our evil acts. Whenever we do generous things, we are tempted to do them for our own gratification. I have a pastor friend who confesses that he gets an adrenaline rush from solving people's problems. Reinhold Niebuhr warned that we are never in such great danger as when we have done something good, for it is then that we are most tempted to smugness and self-congratulation. I remind my students that the student who is leaving her dormitory for church, but who stops to wag a finger of righteous reminder at the student who is bent on her knees at the commode, barfing out the sins of Saturday night, stands in much greater danger of damnation than the poor hungover creature.

The real scandal of God's prevenient and predestining grace is that God refuses to give us what we deserve. He has acted in Jesus Christ to do for us what we could not possibly do for ourselves—namely, to free us from the cocoon of sin and self-interest. These wondrously Glad Tidings mean that our hope and our worth, our present and our future, our dignity and our honor and destiny are not dependent upon our own goodness but upon God's grace. It is God who in Christ chooses graciously to dispose himself toward

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choice to be the very definition of damnation. Our foreparents believed that to choose and to get whatever one wants is not freedom but slavery, not liberty but death.

Why so great a reversal? Our Calvinist forbears understood that the human will is crooked at its core. The human heart, said Calvin, is a factory for the perpetual making of idols. He thus joined Luther and Augustine in speaking of original sin, the disease that we cannot cure by trying harder and doing better. Catholics and Protestants agree that we are fallen and sinful creatures at the very center of our being. This does not mean that we are utterly worthless wretches. On the contrary, we remain essentially good because we are made in God's good image. Yet we have forfeited the good that God provided us in creation. Even the best of us has made Adam's sin our own. Like lost sheep we have all gone astray and awry. There is none righteous, not even one. We are all guilty lambs who have made ourselves helpless prey before the ravenous

us, and in that gracious choice lies our only freedom.

President Clinton seems not to understand this great glad news. He felt compelled to make a public act of contrition for his sexual sin in order for God and his countrymen to forgive him. Here is what he confessed: "It is important to me that everybody who has ever been hurt know that the sorrow I feel is genuine." As the University of Chicago theologian Jean Elshtain has pointed out, Mr. Clinton was far more concerned that his audience feel his pain than he was willing to admit his sin. Had the president understood the scandalously Good News that he is *already* forgiven, I believe that he would not have made his statement at a national Prayer Breakfast but at the Immanuel Baptist Church of Little Rock, and with no television cameras or reporters present. There he would have confessed his great gratitude for God's forgiveness, his true sorrow at having violated his Savior as well as his family

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and friends, and thus his serious determination to perform genuine acts of repentance—namely, by resigning his office and spending his remaining days doing anonymous charity and church work in his native Arkansas.

The inevitable question arises: What about those who misuse their freedom, who turn away from grace, who are either contemptuous or indifferent toward God? Doesn't their sinful unbelief cancel His gracious gift? Paul asks the same question in Romans 3: "What if some are unfaithful? Does their faithfulness nullify the faithfulness of God?" Paul's answer is as unequivocal as it is emphatic: "By no means! Let God be true, though every man be false." Paul does not make sin unserious. Quite to the contrary, sin is now made all the more serious for being committed in the face of God's goodness. As Karl Barth liked to say, Hell is re-

served chiefly for Christians! Yet sin and damnation are not the first or final reality. The one unchangeable fact is God's prevenient and predestining grace. Nothing can separate us from it. What if everyone on earth, Paul asks, were to deny the grace of God? Would it then be negated, rendered null and void? Paul knew that this supreme denial had happened already. It occurred at Golgotha. As the old Negro spiritual makes clear, we all were there when they crucified our Lord. There every man and woman, every son and daughter of our Original Parents, declared themselves utterly false. Yet God remains true now even as then. He answers our graceless No with his own gracious negation of it. And this double negative makes for the grandest of affirmatives: the unbounded Yes of the Gospel.

It follows that predestination and prevenience do not chiefly concern who's in and who's out. They are not mainly about the accepted and the rejected. These doctrines declare that God is utterly free and gracious, and therefore that He wills for us to be utterly free and gracious. They tell us that God elects us rather than we Him. They teach that God chooses us not for a life of privilege and ease and self-satisfaction, but for a life of service and charity, of abundant joy and true liberty. Karl Barth clarifies this complicated matter in two staggering paradoxes. God condemns us, says Barth, by acquitting us. God imprisons us by flinging wide the cell door. What Barth means by these mind-bending analogies is that we discover the real extent of our guilt when we have stood at the foot of the Cross, the very place where God abandoned his Son to our sin in order that we be made innocent. We know the real extent of our freedom when we see that we have imprisoned ourselves in sin, but that God has set ajar the jail door in order to re-enslave us to a life of obedience and gratitude and humility.

This, then, is the happy scandal of our redemption. It is not easy to see, and it is even harder to enact. The call of the Cross is not to be pious or to do good, but to throw our lives away into the bottomless well of gratitude to the God who has given us so great a salvation. Freedom lies not in doing what we sinfully and selfishly want, but rather in doing what we faithfully and generously should—namely, in giving ourselves gladly to God and our neighbor. Blessed are those who are not offended at Jesus Christ, for they have happily surrendered all desire to save themselves, seeking and finding their only worth in Him. Amen.

Books in Review

Fides et Ratio: On the Relationship between Faith and Reason. by Pope John Paul II. Pauline Books and Media, Boston, 1998. 131 pages.

Reviewed by Donald Bloesch
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In his provocative encyclical on faith and reason Pope John Paul II responds to the challenge of religious and cultural pluralism by affirming a faith that builds upon cultural wisdom rather than overthrows it. In this view, natural reason can lead to faith but cannot secure it. Reason on its own can successfully formulate "the first universal principles of being," yet reason cannot reach its goal unless it is deepened by an encounter with divine revelation (13). Just as grace builds upon nature and brings it to fulfillment, so faith perfects reason. Many roads lead to God, the encyclical claims, though they do not become salvific unless they culminate in the revelation of God in Jesus Christ.

John Paul calls for a recovery of the creative role of philosophy in explicating truths that have their basis in reason and experience. Philosophy's concern is with the insights of culture and human experience. Theology's focus is on the mystery of God's self-revelation in Christ. Philosophical wisdom can be a propaedeutic to divine revelation. Philosophy and theology have the same purpose: to explain the mystery of human existence. Yet their methods differ. The transcendent truth that theology elucidates does not annul philosophical truth but brings it to fulfillment. Both disciplines have their proper spheres and therefore a degree of autonomy; even so, they cannot stand by themselves in glorious isolation. The creative probings and questions of human culture and philosophy are steps on the way to the vision of God. Like his mentor Thomas Aquinas, the author tries to take seriously the implacable reality of human sin that impairs and deflects the reasoning process. Yet reason when assisted by grace can remain true to its goal of knowing reality as it is, not merely what it seems to be.

The pope laments the bifurcation of faith and reason so prevalent in contemporary times. When reason

is separated from faith we have the aberration of rationalism; when faith is severed from reason we have the heresy of fideism. John Paul is especially intent on countering the ethos of postmodernism, which reduces philosophy to pragmatic and utilitarian concerns. He strongly adheres to the unity of metaphysical and personal truth and urges theology to relate to the metaphysical questions that have engaged philosophy in the past. The rise of pluralism is symptomatic of "the lack of confidence in truth" (14). It is based on the fallacious assumption that "all positions are equally valid." Philosophical commitments must never be confounded with the truth of faith, but they can lead to an acceptance of this truth so long as they remain open to the reality of the living God.

Pope John Paul's warnings against modern relativism are on the mark, but his portrayal of the situation lacks the realism of Reformation faith. He sees the human person not as a sinner in bondage to powers beyond human control but as "a free and intelligent subject, with the capacity to know God, truth and goodness." The Reformers were convinced that the person in sin must be given not only faith but also the capacity to receive faith and act in faith. The pope, citing Augustine, urges that the soul return into itself, for deep within us "there dwells the truth" (26).

In evangelical theology the criterion for truth lies not within the self but in the biblical witness to Jesus Christ, which confronts us from without as an invading, transforming force. For John Paul the supreme rule of faith derives from the unity that the Spirit creates between sacred tradition, sacred Scripture and the magisterium of the church (74). In the evangelical view enunciated by the Reformers, and most eloquently in the twentieth century by Karl Barth, the supreme role of faith is Jesus Christ himself speaking and acting in the scriptural proclamation, which purifies and judges church tradition, thereby making tradition a fit vessel for divine revelation. Scripture, tradition and the teaching office of the church are not coequal authorities (as the author implies), but church teaching and tradition are under Scripture, and Scripture in turn is under the gospel, God's witness to himself in Jesus Christ.

Christians should not aim so much for a synthesis of Christ and culture as for the transformation of cul-

ture by the grace of the living God working in and through faith. Cultural insights need to be harnessed in the service of the gospel, but in the process they will be purified and reformed (John Paul also uses this language on occasion). The answer to syncretism and pluralism is not building on the creative insights of other religions or seeking a convergence with non-Christian philosophies, but confessing that the wisdom of the world is woefully inadequate either as a preparatory vessel or as a confirmatory guide to Christian faith and revelation. The proclamation of the gospel does not allow peoples in other cultures to preserve their cultural identity (as John Paul claims) but loosens their fidelity to the culture and worldly authorities by placing dependence on the God who stands over and against all human culture and religion (90). Culture needs to be redeemed more than to be fulfilled. Natural reason does not lead to revelation, but revelation can place reason on a new foundation. Reason and culture can be made to serve the truth of faith, albeit not on the basis of their own power. A Christ-culture synthesis could undercut the capacity of the church to bring a prophetic word of judgment upon the culture and also upon the church.

(We should recognize that this pope has on occasion spoken prophetically to the culture, but he has had much more difficulty in allowing the gospel to correct and purify the teachings and practices of the church. For H. Richard Niebuhr's astute critique of the synthesist position, see his *Christ and Culture*, New York: Harber and Bros., 1951, pp. 141-48.)

What is called for, especially today, is a counter-cultural revolution that has its source in the outpouring of the Holy Spirit and its goal in bringing all things into submission to Jesus Christ. Like the church father Athanasius, Christians must stand against the world (*contra mundum*), with its idolatries and zealotries, before we can credibly point the world to the One who alone redeems from sin and hell.

We would do well to listen to Pope John Paul as an earnest pastoral teacher, but we must listen critically, knowing that there will always be an infinite qualitative distinction between the church and the kingdom of God, the conclusions of a searching reason and the mysteries of faith. I can empathize with the pope's concern to bring faith and reason into an underlying unity, but the truth of faith will always stand above the grasp of natural reason (cf. Ps. 139:6; Rom 11:33-34). The God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob is not the god of the philosophers, as Pascal reminds us. We should invite the world not to share insights and wisdom but to let go of its idolatries and false securities and place its destiny in the hands of the living God alone, who saves without human assistance and who justifies while we are still in our sins. Before there can be a conversion of

the world, there must be a reform of the church, and this can occur only by a rediscovery of the gospel of free grace testified to in Holy Scripture. We need today a theology of Word and Spirit rather than a theology of church and tradition, though the former will certainly include the latter. John Paul has many worthwhile things to say about the role of the Spirit, and he speaks not so much as an adversary of evangelical faith (as we in the Reformed tradition understand it) but as one who is close to this faith. He can even be considered an ally in the battle against syncretism and pluralism, but one whose vision has been partially compromised by an over-dependence on the classical philosophical heritage. This tradition can be helpful to people of faith but by no means should it be treated as the foundation for faith.

Peter Martyr Vermigli and Predestination: the Augustinian Inheritance of an Italian Reformer, by Frank A. James III. Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1998. 261 pages.

Reviewed by Dan Ledwith, PTS '99

In the prevailing view of Reformation history and theology, Luther, Calvin and other major Reformers developed the major tenets of Protestant theology on their own. Unique doctrines like double predestination, it seems, developed independently of any consistent historical precedent. While a few scholars, namely Heiko Oberman, have speculated that there must be close connections between Reformed theology and medieval Catholic theology, no one has been able to isolate the link with satisfying precision. Frank James' *Peter Martyr Vermigli and Predestination: The Augustinian Inheritance of an Italian Reformer* may put an end to this era in Reformation history. According to James, there is a direct link. Oberman erred in trying to find it in Luther, when the overt connection lies between Vermigli—an important but often neglected Reformer—and the medieval theologian Gregory of Rimini.

To make this case, James divides his argument into three parts. He first explores the doctrine of predestination in the work of Vermigli; second, he looks for the possible intellectual origins of Vermigli's doctrine of predestination in Aquinas and Gregory; and finally, he examines the possible links with other reformation

leaders, principally Zwingli and Bucer. Throughout the work James shows his careful scholarship, as all 261 pages are heavily footnoted, making the book a much quicker read than one might initially expect. He writes clearly and logically, assuming a fair amount of background in Reformation history in the reader.

Vermigli's position on predestination was uncommon in that it was a full blown *gemina predestinatio*, double predestination. Predestination for Vermigli is a soteriological act that finds its ultimate cause in the *propositum Dei*, the purpose of God. This *propositum Dei*, as Vermigli understood it, is virtually synonymous with the will of God. God's will is absolutely free, and is an expression of his sovereignty. For Vermigli, its clearest biblical expression comes from the Genesis account of Jacob and Esau, and in Paul's exposition of that passage in Romans 9. James cites Vermigli's formal definition of predestination as:

the most wise purpose of God by which he has decreed firmly from before all eternity, to call those whom he has loved in Christ to the adoption as sons, to be justified by faith, and subsequently to glorify through good works, those who shall be conformed to the image of the Son of God, that in them the glory and mercy of the Creator might be declared. (69)

Predestination for Vermigli concerns only the elect. It is a positive salvific act, exemplifying God's mercy and grace toward sinful humanity that deserves nothing but damnation. James describes Vermigli's doctrine of predestination as the "rescue of undeserving sinners" (56). For Vermigli, the predestination of individuals is in no way based on God's foreknowledge of human choices or events. It is born solely in the *propositum Dei*. Therefore James sees Vermigli's predestination as "decisively infralapsarian" (57). Also, predestination is an active event. God actively saves the elect from the just consequences of their sins.

This view of predestination obviously requires a doctrine of reprobation. Vermigli defined reprobation as:

the most wise purpose of God, whereby he has before all eternity decreed, without any injustice, not to have mercy on those whom he has not loved, but passed over, that by their just condemnation, he might declare his wrath toward sins and also declare his glory. (79)

James's exposition of Vermigli's definition of reprobation can be summed up in five points. First, as with predestination, reprobation has its ultimate cause in the *propositum Dei*. Here Vermigli concentrates his attention on the image of the potter and the clay vessels. "There is nothing inherent," James writes, "in the ves-

sels to distinguish one clay vessel from the other, for both are equally imperfect. The decision on which to retain and which to discard derives from the potter's preference and nothing else. The potter takes no delight in repudiating a clay vessel, but nor does he hesitate" (57-58). Second, reprobation is a passive action by God. While God actively predestines, God passively reprobates. While God actively works to save some, he deliberately withholds that saving grace from others. The reason for this lies with in Vermigli's mysterious *propositum Dei*. Third, reprobation is distinct from condemnation. Condemnation is based on committed sins and deserved guilt. Reprobation is grounded in the *propositum Dei* and has no view to temporally committed sins. Fourth, while separate from reprobation, condemnation inevitably follows reprobation. Fifth, reprobation is an expression of the justice of God. There is nothing unjust about God deciding not to show mercy to sinful creatures. This act shows God's justice and wrath towards sin.

In the second part of his book, James looks at the possible patristic and medieval sources where Vermigli may have found his idea of *gemina predestinatio*. Here we find the link between Vermigli and Gregory of Rimini. James explores the figures whom Vermigli primarily read during his time at the University of Padua, Thomas Aquinas and Gregory of Rimini. James does grant that there is some resemblance in Vermigli's doctrine of *gemina predestinatio* to Aquinas. On the other hand, the doctrine outlined above is very close to Gregory of Rimini's. Both rely almost exclusively on Augustine and Scripture as their primary sources, and both seek to answer the same question: how does one distinguish between the causes of predestination and the effects of predestination? Both thought that the Pelagians had confused those two, and the question had been clouded by their thought. Both agree that the ultimate cause of predestination is the *propositum dei*, and that this effects three results: vocation, justification, and glorification (132-33).

James then entertains the possibility that other Protestant reformers of the time, with whom he came into contact while in Italy, influenced his doctrine. This is the subject of the third and final section of James' book. The two Reformers active in Italy at the time are Zwingli and Bucer. However, upon examination James finds little possible influence from either one. While there are general areas of common ground between Vermigli and Zwingli and Bucer, there are great differences between them. All three theologians, James argues, believe that the will of God is the ultimate cause of predestination. But the similarity ends there. Zwingli saw predestination as a sub-category of providence, while for Vermigli it was a soteriological doctrine. Bucer saw predestination as an ethical doc-

trine to further Christian piety, while for Vermigli the doctrine is formalized and concerned with the cause of predestination. And while both Zwingli and Bucer allowed for the predestination of “moral pagans,” Vermigli explicitly does not (211, 235).

If neither Zwingli nor Bucer influenced Vermigli to any great extent, then we are left with only two options: either Vermigli inherited the doctrine from Gregory, or he came up with it on his own. While James admits that Vermigli certainly had the intellectual acumen to develop the doctrine, the resemblance of Vermigli’s *gemina predestinatio* to Gregory’s favors the former over the latter.

The link between Vermigli and Gregory shows that the Reformation did not take place in a theological vacuum, but rather took one of its key themes from streams of thought already in existence in medieval Catholic theology. At least in terms of this doctrine, then, Catholicism and Protestantism have much more in common than we are often willing to grant, and it suggests that if we really want to understand the Protestant Reformation, we must understand late medieval Catholicism. I eagerly await further study on such a connection of Reformation theology with legitimate streams of medieval theology.

A Door of Hope, by Robert T. Henderson. Herald Press, Scottsdale, 1997. 159 pages.

Reviewed by Matthew Koenig

Whether entering or leaving Seminary, anyone with the intention of going into parish ministry ought to get hold of Bob Henderson’s *A Door of Hope*. An afternoon spent digesting this book could save someone years of heartache in the pastorate.

The strength of the book comes by way of its humility. Its author has known the disappointment of shattered expectations in the ministry. Henderson is at his best when he systematically undercuts all your wrong motivations for going into ministry. He has been there, and he has been chastened by the Holy Spirit.

Henderson begins the book with a reflection by Annie Dillard in which a giant waterbug, which has inserted an enzyme into the underbelly of a frog, dis-

solves the frog’s insides, and sucks its guts out. The grittiness of this introduction pervades Henderson’s work, for he has seen this same disembowelment happen to countless pastors, and he can’t guarantee it won’t happen to you.

After this introduction, the reader senses that Henderson isn’t writing this book to make a name for himself, or to make any friends. He’s writing to simply tell something he knows a lot about. You get the feeling you can learn from him if you listen.

Henderson’s second chapter, “It’s not neutral out there”, is chock-full of wisdom for the graduating seminarian going into ministry. If you felt the Seminary was spiritually vacuous, don’t expect the Kingdom of Heaven in the parish. Henderson thought the renewal of the church was simply waiting for him, but instead he was shot down in his first church by “an eagle-eyed champion of fundamentalist orthodoxy who could discover motes of false doctrine in the eyes of the straightest company of puritans!” (28)

It is telling that this experience comes from a woman on the right of the theological spectrum. Henderson is, after all, the Seminary representative for Presbyterians for Renewal, a conservative voice in the PC (USA). But he makes no claims that evangelical conservatives are God’s faithful remnant in a church controlled by liberals. Everyone receives equal critique here. And note well that Henderson offers *critique* of the current situation. Not polemics. Not diatribe. We sense Henderson is beyond that. His hope is for renewal.

And hope is ultimately the point of this book, as the title reveals. Henderson wants to set two spiritual realms against each other; “the valley of Achor, where Israel stoned Achan and his family for bringing defeat upon Israel” (Josh. 7:37), and “a door of hope, which Yahweh promised to create in the middle of that cursed place” (37).

Henderson discusses these ideas through the dialogue of three fictional individuals, each ten years out of seminary. Ben is a gifted, successful pastor of a large and prosperous congregation. Debbie pastors a smaller congregation in a small suburban town. And Andy went to a small church in a blue collar village. As we can see, Henderson mixes up the flavors here. The problems these people have are not monochrome. So if you try to justify yourself, saying something like, “hey, I don’t want to be a big-church pastor, just a small church family is enough for me”, Henderson won’t let you get away with it. All these pastors face difficult challenges. Ben gets swept up in the success and loses his vision. Debbie becomes a workaholic, out to prove that women can succeed in ministry. Andy’s congregation never seems to move anywhere.

At this point we should note one problem with the

book: the characters are not always sufficiently distinguished from one another in their conversations. You get the sense that Debbie's responses might come from Andy, for instance. But when we remember that Henderson is a pastor and evangelist, not a novelist, we can overlook this flaw.

As these three characters face the valley of Achor and the door of hope, Henderson addresses the subtitle in this book, "spiritual conflict in pastoral ministry". The church has lost its sense of its spiritual battle, Henderson asserts, and it needs a new appreciation of the eschatological mind-set of the New Testament, including the acknowledgment of the evil of Satan. "There is the battle behind the battle, demonic irrationality, a subtle, malignant, and never-ending opposition to the development of congregations submitted to the dominion of God" (22). Henderson argues that although the church clearly faces political persecution, most of the opposition pastors face is from inside the Christian community, "subtle, distracting, or subversive. It may come through malicious attacks on your ministry by folk who totally dislike you, or as pious suggestions from close friends who lead you away from the purpose of God" (43). Henderson acknowledges that he lacks the exegetical or theological training to explicate this argument more systematically, but he has encountered an other-worldly, evil reality, and he believes the eschatological language of the New Testament names that evil.

Henderson's vision is for "kingdom pastors": committed to the eschatological kingdom as preached by Jesus in the sermon on the mount—"the Vision is not of a rich church, a successful church, or a super-church. The gospel of the kingdom is addressed to the poor, the crushed, the blind, and the imprisoned" (107). Kingdom pastors rely on God's strength alone, and look for the in-breaking of the kingdom, not the outward appearances of the church.

In his concluding chapters Henderson makes practical suggestions. Seminarians, be honest with a church hiring committee, sharing your vision and asking tough questions about the church. Pastors, make devotional time with God is an absolute necessity. Pray intercessory prayers for the congregation. Make the scandal of the slain lamb and the atonement of Christ the center of the church again, and may the preached word be clearly based on Scripture. Let the laity become disciples by getting close to you and modeling you. Exposit particular portions of the Bible well rather than giving a smattering of texts throughout the year.

Henderson offers us a wise book seasoned with pastoral experience and a gritty vision of a lack of faith within the church. Yet, he also treats congregations and churches charitably, with hope for their renewal.

